

The Arakanese king Man Pa (c. 1531 – 1553) depicted as a god standing on Ganesa with his Arakanese and Bengali wives on his side. Mrauk U, Shittaung temple.





Arakan and Bengal  
The rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma)  
from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century AD

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Stephan Egbert Arie van Galen

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**Promotiecommissie**

Promotor: Prof. dr. D.H.A. Kolff

Copromotor: Dr. J.J.L. Gommans

Referent: Dr. J.P. Leider (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris)

Overige leden: Prof. dr. P.C. Emmer  
Prof. dr. F.S. Gaastra  
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Dr. L.J. Wagenaar (Universiteit van Amsterdam)



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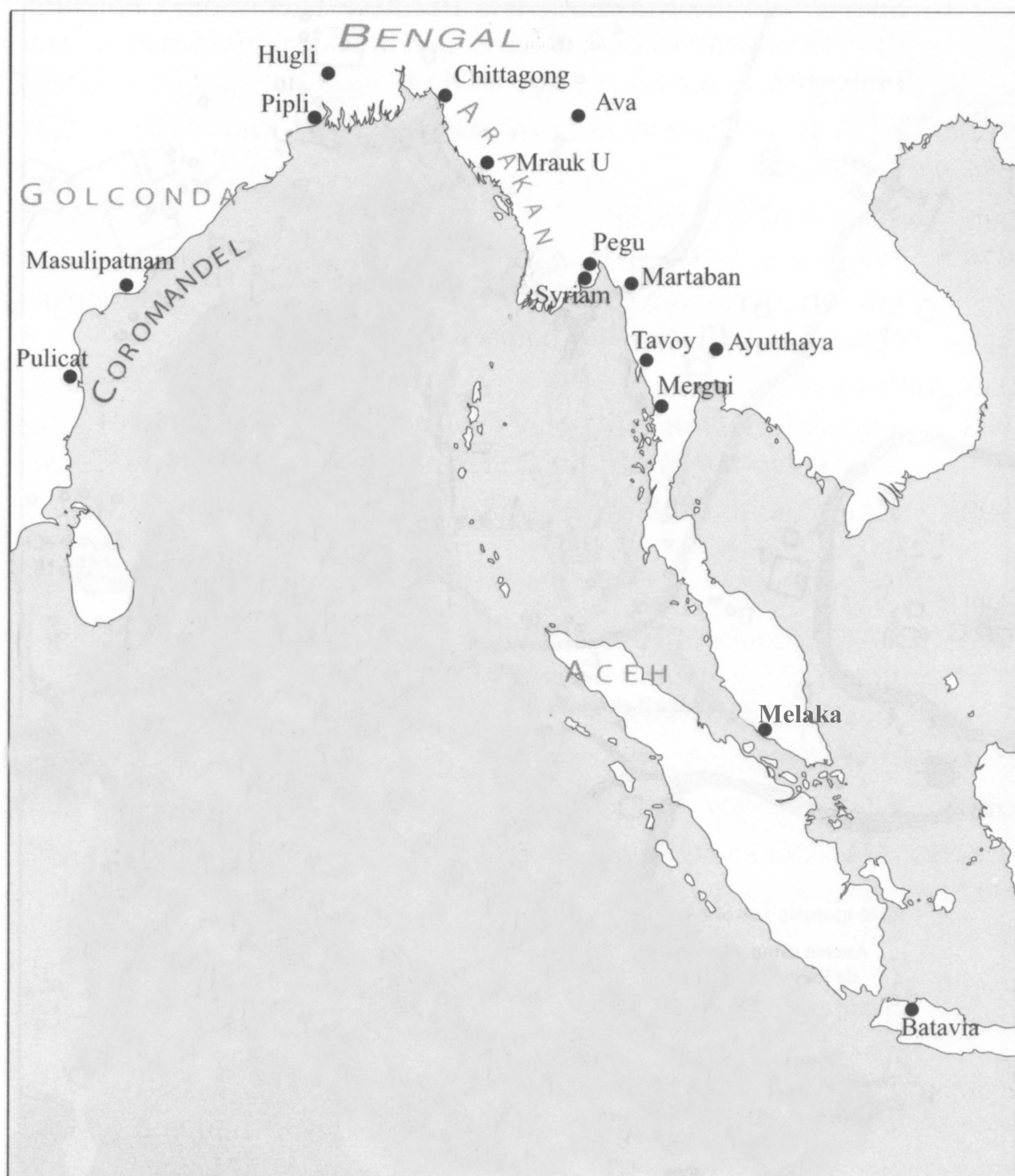
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## ARAKAN AND THE BAY OF BENGAL



To my parents



## PREFACE

Arakan ... is a sort of wild and jungly Holland, being made up of islands intersected by branches of the sea ...<sup>1</sup>  
 [Thomas Campbell Robertson, British commissioner of Arakan 1825-1826.]

After having arrived in Mrauk U at midnight in a dugout canoe in January 1999 Arakan would never again be far away in my thoughts. The journey on the Kaladan river that preceded it would prove to be symbolic for the course my research has taken; taking a wrong turn here and there, foundering occasionally, but ever penetrating further into ‘the land of the great image’. Writing this dissertation has been tough at times, as these things ought to be, but mostly it has been a great joy and I have seen it as a privilege. My journey would not have been possible without the help and support of many people and as it is customary to attach to a work such as this an almost interminable list of those to whom the author feels indebted I shall make no exception to this custom, and with good reason.

First, I wish to thank Peter Marshall for directing my interests towards Asian studies and guiding me on my first awkward steps into the field. The enthusiasm with which my research has been received in Arakan has been immensely stimulating and has contributed in no small means to the fact that this book is now, at last, finished. I must thank, Aung Kyaw Zan, Phyu Phyu Sann and Aung Tho Oo for the warm welcome I received in Burma and Arakan and for their help in many ways. Discussions with Tun Aung Chain, Thibaut d’ Hubert, Pamela Gutman, Om Prakash, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Cathérine Raymond and Swapna Bhattacharya provided useful insights and fresh perspectives. I wish to thank Hans de Jonge, Michiel de Jong, Ivo van Loo and Sjaak van Galen for their editorial suggestions and continuing encouragement. I am indebted to Azimi Nezimuddin, Anne van Galen, and Rinia Steegstra for their help in translating various texts that would have otherwise been inaccessible to me. I must also express my appreciation to Kyaw Minn Htin who guided me on several occasions during my trips to Arakan and was a pleasant companion from whom I have learned much about Arakan and Arakanese history.

I am particularly grateful to the board of the NVAO for having allowed me time off from work to complete this book. I would like to thank the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) for sponsoring the 1999 Academy Colloquium on coastal Burma that brought together a wide variety of specialists on Lower Burma. The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) who made an extended field trip to Arakan possible in 1999, and the VSB fund

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Campbell Robertson, *Political incidents of the first Burmese war* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), p. 4.

for providing financial support for a year at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1996. I also express my thanks to the staffs of the National Archives and the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, the British Library, the Oriental and India Office Collections and the Bodleian Library who have all provided me patiently with countless books, manuscripts, maps &c.

I am extremely grateful to my wife Tanja, who has supported this project from start to finish and accompanied me on many research trips. I thank her for her encouragement and support, without which I never could have completed this work. My children Jan and Ella have already probably heard more than they ever wanted to about Arakan, the Mughals and Burma. The joy and happiness which they provide have certainly stimulated me to finish this project. Finally, thanks go to my parents, to whom I dedicate this work.

## INTRODUCTION

After he ascended the Ganges, leaving four very famous cities behind, he descended to a city that belonged to [the] Maharaja, where there is an abundance of aloe-wood, of gold and silver, gems and pearls. After he had left this, he undertook a journey of 13 days through the mountains in the east looking for carbuncles, and he first returned to Cernovis and after that to Buffetania. After that he reached - travelling by sea during a month - the mouth of the river of Arakan and in six days he reached the city with the same name that was situated further on. Seventeen days through mountains without any dwellings, subsequently fifteen days through a vast plain he entered a river bigger than the Ganges, which the inhabitants name Dava [i.e. the river of Ava]. Then, he was brought, sailing upriver during one month, to the most noble city of all cities, that is called 'Ava', 15,000 feet in circumference.<sup>1</sup> [Nicolo di Conti, Venetian merchant and traveller, narrative of his journey from India to Burma – first half of the fifteenth century.]

The fort [...] consists of three concentric walls [...] which form the citadel. These walls are of considerable thickness and extent, constructed with large stones, and with a degree of labour, such as a powerful state alone could have commanded. Where the masonry is dilapidated, the interstices have, by the Burmans, been filled up with piles of timber. This interior work is comparably trifling to that by which, in former days, the defects in the circumvallation of hills appear to have been supplied. At every point where the continuity of their natural outline is broken, artificial embankments, faced with masonry, some of a very great height, connect them with each other. [...] The extent of the circumvallation is about nine miles. At the gateways the stone walls appear to have been of considerable elevation and great solidity, but where the steepness, or altitude of the hill rendered artificial defences of less importance, a low wall of brick or stone has been carried along the summit. These defences are said to have been constructed several centuries ago.<sup>2</sup> [Brigadier-General T.W. Morrison, commander of the British forces invading Arakan, commenting on the defences of Mrauk U – 2 April 1825.]

When somewhere during the first half of the fifteenth century the Venetian merchant Nicolo di Conti travelled through the Bay of Bengal he passed through the kingdom of Arakan.<sup>3</sup> Di Conti did not have much to report about Arakan. The capital city, Mrauk U, did not stand out

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<sup>1</sup> *'Gangem ascendens quator ciuitatibus famosissimis post se relictis ad Maaratiam prepotentem urbem desvendit, ubi ligni aloes aurique et argenti, gemmarum quoque ac magrarirarum magna uis. Hac relictis cum montes ad orientem sitos carbuncolorum gratia .xiii. dierum itinere petisset, primum Cernouem deinde Buffetaniam rediit. Mari deinceps cum mense integro ad hostium Rachani fluuii peruenisset, atque inde eiusdem nominis ciuitatem supra flumen sitam diebus sex petisset. Per desertos habitaculis montes decem et septem, inde per campos patentes .xv. diebus profectus, flumen maius Gange est ingressus, Daua ab incolis appellatum. Tum fertur mensis nauigatione aduerso flumine ad ciuitatem nobilissimam omnium, que dicitur Aua .xv. mil.pas. circuitu amplexam'*. From the travels of Nicolo di Conti (c. A.D. 1396-1469) as recorded c. A.D. 1445 by Poggio Bracciolini, *De Varietate Fortunae* ed. O. Merisalo (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1993), p. 158. See for a recent appraisal of the various editions of Conti's travels Kennon Breazeale, 'Editorial Introduction to Nicolò de' Conti's Account', *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 2.2 (2004), pp. 100-110.

<sup>2</sup> Copy of a despatch from Brigadier-General T.W. Morrison, commanding south-eastern division to W.L. Watson, deputy Adjutant-General of the Army, dated Arakan camp 2 April 1825 in H.H. Wilson ed., *Documents illustrative of the Burmese war* (Calcutta, 1827), pp. 129-134.

<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation Arakan will be used to refer to the area which is in Arakanese known as *Rakhaing* or *Rakhine*. Arakan is a corruption of *Rakhaing*, used in western sources since the early sixteenth century. The Arakanese traditionally derive this name from the Pali *Rakkha*, or the Sanskrit *Raksasa* synonymous with the Burmese *Bilu* or Ogre. The Arakanese are by the Burmese also referred to as *Myammagye* or 'Great Burmese', the Burmese tracing their decent from the Arakanese. BL OIOC, Mss. Eur. C 13, Copy of a journal of progress and observations during the continuance of the deputation from Bengal to Ava in 1795 in the dominions of the Barma monarch by dr. F. Buchanan, fols. 172, 176-177; Pamela Gutman, *Ancient Arakan: with special reference to its cultural history between the 5th and 11th centuries* (PhD thesis: Australian National University, 1977), pp. 1-3.

amongst the many cities and countries he had visited.<sup>4</sup> The only thing he recalled about Arakan was that it was situated on the bank of a river and surrounded by a tract of uninhabited mountains. For Nicolo di Conti Arakan was just another harbour en route to his next destination, the magnificent city of Ava.

Four hundred years later, when the British laid siege to Mrauk U, they on the other hand were struck by the formidable remains of what appeared to have been a powerful state, but what was at that moment little more than a virtually deserted border area between the Burmese and British empires.<sup>5</sup> The centuries between the arrival of Nicolo di Conti and the British annexation of Arakan in 1825 had apparently witnessed a remarkable expansion and subsequent decline of the Mrauk U kingdom in Arakan.

Today we know that the Arakanese kingdom had indeed from the fifteenth century grown from a small agrarian kingdom, with its nucleus in the heart of the Kaladan valley, to a significant regional power by the early seventeenth century. During this period the rulers of Sri Ayodhyapura, as Mrauk U was also known, were able to assert their influence across the northern shores of the Bay of Bengal.<sup>6</sup> In the first decades of the seventeenth century Arakanese kings received tribute from local rulers between Dhaka and Pegu, cities more than a thousand miles apart.<sup>7</sup> From the middle of the seventeenth century the Arakanese kingdom was gripped by a seemingly sudden decline that would culminate in civil war at the end of the century and the loss of control over south-eastern Bengal, eventually followed by the conquest of Arakan by the Burmese king Badon alias Bodawpaya in 1784.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As the exact date of Di Conti's visit to Arakan is not known it is possible that he visited Arakan at a time when Laungkarak was the capital city. Mrauk U was founded in 1430.

<sup>5</sup> *An Account of the Burman Empire and the Kingdom of Assam. Compiled from the works and M.S. documents of the following most eminent authors and public functionaries, viz. Hamilton, Symes, Canning, Cox, Leyden, F. Buchanan, Morgan, Towers, Elmore, Wade, Turner, Sisson, Elliot, &c. &c.* (Calcutta, 1839), pp. 84-86.

<sup>6</sup> The name Sri Ayodhyapura refers to the magnificent city of the Sanskrit epic the Ramayana. Ayodhya literally means 'not to be warred against'; the undefeatable. The name was of course used as well by the Siamese for their capital Ayutthaya. Letter from governor-general C.J. Speelman to king Candasudhammaraja, dated 20 September 1682. *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India anno 1624-1682* 30 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1887-1931), vol. 1682 entry for 23 September 1682, pp. 1127-1129.

<sup>7</sup> The Mughal rulers of Bengal were forced to build a string of forts to defend the areas around Dhaka and Hugli against the Arakanese. See especially the forts at Khizrpur (Hajiganj Fort), Idrakpur and at Bandar (Sonakanda Fort). N. Chowdhury and B. Ahmed, *Mughal Monuments of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Traditional Photo Gallery, 2006), pp. 112-117. The *thanadar* of Mukhwah near Calcutta famously stretched an iron chain across the river to try and keep Arakanese vessels at bay. BL OIOC Mss. 478 Salimullah, *Tarikh-i Bangala* translated by F. Gladwin as, *A narrative of the transactions in Bengal during the Soobahdaries of Azeem Us Shan, Jaffer Khan, Shuja Khan, Sirafraz Khan and Alivardi Khan translayed from the original Persian* (Calcutta, 1788), p. 84. R.C. Temple ed., *The diaries of Streynsham Master 1675-1680 and other contemporary papers relating thereto* 2 vols. (London, 1911), pp. 2:15, 66. The Burmese created special companies of soldiers and set up a fleet of war boats to protect Pegu. *Hamsavati sittan* of 1802 in Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig, trans. and eds. *Burmese Sit-tans 1764-1826: records of rural life and administration* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> BL OIOC Mss. Eur. D 151. Translation of a letter from the Rajah or principal of the Burmas to the collector of Chittagong, 9 May 1787; G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma. From the earliest times to 10 March 1824, the beginning of the English conquest* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1967), p. 267.

The rapid rise and decline of the Arakanese kingdom between the early sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth century is the subject of this dissertation. It is my contention that the expansion and subsequent disintegration of the Arakanese kingdom was closely connected to its ability to control large parts of south-eastern Bengal, especially the area around Chittagong. Control over south-eastern Bengal and Chittagong was the key to the success of the Arakanese kingdom and was achieved by the establishment of a close cooperation between the Arakanese and Portuguese renegades, or *chatins*, living in Bengal. The loss of control over the Chittagong area would from the middle of the seventeenth century lead to the demise of the Mrauk U kingdom.

### *Arakan and south-eastern Bengal*

From the middle of the sixteenth century Arakanese kings gained a dominant position over the city of Chittagong and south-eastern Bengal. This area shares many geologic and climatologic characteristics with the Arakan littoral. South-eastern Bengal is defined here as comprising the area classically known as Vanga or Banga within the two main streams of the Ganges - from the Hugli to the Padma-Meghna, and the lands east of the Brahmaputra delta between Dhaka and Bhalua to Ramu (Panwa), classically known as Harikela.<sup>9</sup> The first Arakanese claims to kingship in this part of Bengal can be dated to the middle of the fifteenth century, and would only be relinquished at the end of the eighteenth century. Arakanese chronicles point to the important relation between Bengal and Arakan already in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The various chronicle traditions regarding the foundation of the Mrauk U kingdom all describe how the exiled Arakanese king Man Co Mwan (c.1404-1433) conquered Arakan with the help from a Bengal Sultan.<sup>10</sup> As this conquest took place at the end of the second decade of the fifteenth century we may assume that this was during the reign of the Bengal Sultan Jalal ud-Din Muhammad Shah (1415-1432).<sup>11</sup> Although the divergent accounts of the various Arakanese chronicles shroud the exact circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Mrauk U dynasty in mystery, they all point to the strong relationship between south-eastern Bengal and Arakan from the early fifteenth century

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<sup>9</sup> In the early part of Muslim rule in Bengal Vanga would be referred to as 'Bang' and it continued to be so known till the name 'Bangalah' got currency in the mid 14th century to denote the whole region of Bengal (present Bangladesh and the Indian province of West Bengal). A.M. Chowdhury, 'Vanga' in *Banglapedia. National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> See Jacques P. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan, Birmanie. Son histoire politique entre le début du XV<sup>e</sup> et la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), pp. 60-62 and for a discussion on the duration of the reign of this king and his name Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names... A discussion of Muslim influence in the Mrauk U period', P. Pichard and F. Robinne ed., *Études birmanes en hommage à Denise Bernot* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Jalal ud-Din faced several rebellions early on in his reign but restored control of the Bengal sultanate over south-eastern Bengal and Chittagong by 1420. Richard M. Eaton, *The rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 52-55.

onwards.<sup>12</sup>

In Arakanese traditions the reign of the *pater patriae* king Man Pa (1531-1553) is generally taken as the beginning of Arakanese control over the area. Firm evidence of Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal is first available for the reign of his son king Man Phalaung (1571-1593).<sup>13</sup> During the heyday of the Mrauk U kingdom contemporary authors testify to the importance of Chittagong for Arakan. In 1649 the Augustinian friar Sebastião Manrique in his *Itinerario de las Misiones de l'India Oriental* called the city 'The Masterkey to the Arakanese Empire'. In the *Itinerario*, Manrique described how strategically important Chittagong was as a political and military cornerstone, and one of the main centres of trade and distribution in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>14</sup>

The Arakanese chronicle traditions describing the conquests of Man Pa in Bengal are quite explicitly anachronistic and we must assume that they are eighteenth-century reconstructions of Man Pa's reign. The importance of the claims to Arakanese sovereignty in Bengal in these stories is the way in which they legitimize the conquest of Bengal by later Arakanese kings. These chronicles claim Arakanese sovereignty over Bengal long before Man Pa's first conquest.<sup>15</sup> From an Arakanese perspective Man Pa only reclaimed what the Arakanese chroniclers call the 'twelve towns of Banga': this part of Bengal had according to them only been ceded to the Bengal sultans by Man Pa's predecessor Man Co Mwan when he accepted Bengali aid in his attempts to recover the kingdom. In this way Man Pa not so much occupied south-eastern Bengal but restored Arakanese control over an area which had earlier belonged to the Arakanese.<sup>16</sup> The claims to Arakanese dominion in Bengal are also illustrated by the use in seventeenth century Bengali, Persian, Portuguese and Dutch sources of the name Magh or Mog to denote the Arakanese dynasty. Seventeenth-century Arakanese kings were portrayed as Magh princes. Magh in this context is a corrupt form of Magadha, the birth-place of Buddhism and the seat of Buddhist culture in the Ganges delta. Bengali poets active at the seventeenth century Arakanese court frequently used terms such as the Magadha empire, or Maghi era when talking about Arakan and Arakanese rule in Bengal. In portraying themselves as heirs to the Buddhist kings of Magadha the Arakanese kings sought to

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion on the various chronicle traditions see Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names'.

<sup>13</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> S. Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastian Manrique 1629-1643* ed. and trans. C.E. Luard and H. Hosten 2 vols. (Oxford: The Hakluyt Society, 1927), pp. 1:283-284.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance the story of king Datha Raja who allegedly resettled rebellious Bengalis in the Arakan littoral in 1156. 'Summary of the work done by Maung San Shwe Bu, Honorary Archaeological officer for Arakan', *Report of the Superintendent Archaeological Survey Burma* (Rangoon, 1919), pp. 55-57.

<sup>16</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 138.

legitimize their rule in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>17</sup> The adoption of titles of Bengal sultans and Muslim names is another example of how Arakanese kings made clear their claims to this part of Bengal.<sup>18</sup>

The central role in Mrauk U history of south-eastern Bengal in general and Chittagong in particular has earlier been noted by D.G.E. Hall, Jacques Leider and Michael Charney. In the recent historiography of the Mrauk U period the fall of Chittagong to the Mughals at the hands of Buzurg Ummed Khan in 1666 is regarded by most scholars as marking the definitive end of an Arakanese Golden Age.<sup>19</sup> This theory was initially suggested in the late 1930s by D.G.E. Hall, who based his assertion on research done on the basis of printed Dutch source material.<sup>20</sup> Leider and Charney have also assumed that the control over Chittagong was vital to the Arakanese kingdom in their analyses of Arakanese history.

Charney has divided early modern Arakanese history into an Early and Late Mrauk U dynasty period. He has suggested a caesura in Arakanese history in 1603, in the middle of the reign of Man Raja-kri, on the basis of a theoretical framework that stresses the importance of trade surpluses and the availability of firearms. Charney argues that the 1603 break away of Arakan's main Portuguese ally, Filipe de Brito de Nicote<sup>21</sup>, was of prime importance to the decline of the Mrauk U dynasty, which according to him commenced about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and abated only briefly under the influx of VOC-derived resources during the 1630s to 1660s. The final blow, that irreparably damaged the stability of the Mrauk U kingdom, was in his view the loss of Chittagong in 1666.

Leider has divided what he calls the later Mrauk U period (1578-1692), or *Le grand siècle arakanais* into two stages. The first, from 1571 to 1622, he describes as *L'âge des rois guerriers*, and the second he has christened *L'âge des seigneurs du palais d'or*, from 1622 to

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the Arakanese regarded Magadha as their 'charter state' in a sense as suggested by V. Lieberman, *Strange parallels. Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800-1830. Volume 1: Integration on the mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 77-78; A. Sharif, 'On Arakan and the Arakanese' in A.B.M. Habibullah, *Nalini Kanta Bhattasali commemoration volume. Essays on archaeology, art, history, literature and philosophy of the Orient, dedicated to the memory of dr. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali [1888-1947 A.D.]* (Dhaka: Dhaka Museum, 1966), pp. 351-360. Cf. S.C. Das, 'A note on the antiquity of Chittagong, compiled from the Tibetan works Pagsam Jon-Zan of Sumpa Khan-po and Kahbab Dun-dan of Lama Tara-Natha', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 67 (1898), pp. 20-28.

<sup>18</sup> For instance Husain Shah by the Arakanese king Man Khamaung. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', p. 211.

<sup>19</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 190-345; M.W. Charney, 'Rise of a mainland trading state: Rakhaing under the early Mrauk U kings, c. 1430-1630', *Journal of Burma Studies* 3 (1998), pp. 1-34. And Charney, 'Crisis and reformation in a maritime kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of instability and political disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan) 1603-1701', *Journal of the Economic and Social history of the Orient* 41,2 (1998), pp. 185-219.

<sup>20</sup> D.G.E. Hall, 'Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26 (1936), pp. 1-31 and Hall, 'The Dagregisters of Batavia and Dutch Trade with Burma in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 29 (1939), pp. 139-156.

<sup>21</sup> For an overview of the career of De Brito see Cayetano J. Socarras, 'The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe de Brito de Nicote', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 3.2 (1966), pp. 3-24.

1692. In short his reasons for this division are as follows. The year 1578 is an approximate starting point for dating Arakanese control over Chittagong, while 1692 marks the beginning of a relatively dark age in Arakanese history. The division between the period of the warrior kings and that of the lords of the golden palace is seen by Leider mainly in the fact that the period of 1622 to 1692 marked the height of Arakanese power and wealth in a relatively stable environment. Leider also suggests that the loss of Chittagong in 1666 heralded the end of the Mrauk U kingdom. Clearly for both authors the fall of Chittagong in 1666 marks the definitive end of an Arakanese Golden Age.<sup>22</sup>

In the various debates that focus on the history of Arakan during the Mrauk U period Chittagong has thus always figured rather prominently. The importance of Chittagong in an Arakanese context has however been more or less assumed rather than explained. The question why Chittagong was so important to Arakan that its loss seems so closely connected to the demise of the Mrauk U kingdom has not yet been asked. In this dissertation I will address the question why Chittagong was so important for the Arakanese kingdom.

I will argue that the death of king Sirisudhammaraja (1622-1638) marks a decisive turning point in the early modern history of Arakan. In 1638, or the year 1000 according to the Arakanese era, not only the old royal line of the Mrauk U kings came to an end, it also marked the start of a gradual withdrawal by the Arakanese from south-eastern Bengal. Interestingly also eighteenth century Arakanese historians seem to have viewed the death of Sirisudhammaraja as the beginning of the end of the Mrauk U kingdom.<sup>23</sup> Far from wanting to support millennialistic ideas, it will be shown that from 1638 onwards several important trends combined which resulted in the gradual decline of the Arakanese kingdom during the last part of the seventeenth century.

It should come as no great surprise that the revision of the history of Arakan that is provided here has implications for how the historical development of neighbouring states like Burma and India should be perceived. This dissertation consequently does more than present a novel approach to Arakanese history; it also suggests new openings for research for historians of Mughal India and Burma. This dissertation shows that the Arakanese kingdom controlled far

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<sup>22</sup> The best account for the battle for Chittagong is provided by Shihab ud-Din Talish, *Fathiyyah-i-ibriyyah* [The victories that give warning] Bodleian Library, MS. Bod. 589, folia 106-176v. Parts were translated by J.N. Sarkar as 'The conquest of Chatgaon, 1666 AD', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3.6 (1907), pp. 405-417 and 'The Feringi pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 AD', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3.6 (1907), pp. 419-425.

<sup>23</sup> San Shwe Bu, 'Report of the honorary archaeological officer, Arakan, for the year ending 31st March 1922', *Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Burma. For the year ending 31st March 1922* C. Duroiselle ed. (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent Government printing Burma, 1922), pp. 59-63; San Shwe Bu, 'Report of the honorary archaeological officer, Arakan, for the year ending 31st March 1925', *Annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1924-25* J. Marshall ed., (Calcutta; Government of India central publication branch, 1927), pp. 30-35. Daw Kyan, 'Rakhine Man Raja Kri Catam', *Myanmar Historical Research Journal* 14 (Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 2004), pp. 29-36, 33.



larger areas of Bengal for a much longer period than was hitherto assumed. It will be argued that the withdrawal of the capital of the Bengal *subah* from Dhaka to Rajmahal by Shah Shuja in the 1630s was not caused by the often quoted ‘unhealthy climate of Dhaka’<sup>24</sup>, but was simply necessary because the Mughals were forced to admit defeat in their wars with Arakan over eastern Bengal. From the moment Akbar’s armies set foot in Bengal in the 1570s to the loss of Chittagong in 1666 Arakanese and Mughal armies fought prolonged campaigns for the control over eastern Bengal. The Arakanese – Mughal conflict could in this light be described as a Ninety Years’ War, lasting from c.1574 to 1666. The reconstruction of this war in this dissertation in fact implies that from the first estimate of Bengal’s revenue by Todar Mal in 1582 to Shah Shuja’s settlement of 1658 between 30 and 50% of the potential revenue of Bengal was situated in an area over which the Mughals and the Arakanese battled for control.<sup>25</sup> For the middle of the seventeenth century this adds up to an estimated 5 out of 10 million Rupees. We can now safely say that these revenues would have been constantly fought over by Bengal *zamindars*, the Mughals and the Arakanese.

From this dissertation it will become clear that the Mughals needed a much longer period of time to bring Bengal under their authority than was hitherto assumed. Eaton’s suggestion that the Mughals had completed the conquest of Bengal in 1612 will be proved to be incorrect. The Mughal conquest of Bengal was only complete in 1666, after the fall of Chittagong.<sup>26</sup> The impact of the war over Bengal between the Arakanese and Mughals on the Bengal economy was significant. During the Mughal-Arakanese conflict over Bengal the centre of gravity of the Bengal economy would shift from the southeast to the northwest. Incessant warfare between Arakan and Mughal India would destroy the economic centres east of Dhaka and rendered Chittagong, geographically speaking the best seaport for all Bengal, useless as an entrepôt. The uncertainties of war drove the large European trading companies far into west Bengal, to places such as Hugli, Calcutta and Chinsura where they were safe from Arakanese attacks.

Similarly it will be made clear that the removal of the Burmese capital from Pegu to Ava in 1634 was not so much the result of a carefully planned withdrawal of the Toungoo kings to their agrarian domains in Upper Burma, but was in fact the immediate result of a prolonged Arakanese-Burmese war which by the 1630s had several times resulted in the sacking of the Burmese capital at Pegu. Again, the reliance on Burmese sources alone has produced in Burmese historiography a singularly one-sided picture of Burmese and

<sup>24</sup> First suggested by Sir Jadunath Sarkar ed., *The History of Bengal. Muslim Period 1200 A.D. – 1757 A.D.* vol. 2 2<sup>nd</sup> reprint (New Delhi: B.R. Publishing corporation, 2004), p. 334.

<sup>25</sup> For Todar Mal’s settlement see Abul Fazl Allami. *The A-in-i Akbari*, H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett trans. 3 vols. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977-1978), pp. 2:129-162, for Shah Shuja’s see Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 198-200 and infra Chapter 8.

<sup>26</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 137-138.

Arakanese history.

### *Sources*

There are unfortunately very little contemporary Arakanese language sources which would enable the reconstruction of the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom as proposed in this dissertation. Fortunately due to the openness of the Arakanese kingdom to the wider world of the Bay of Bengal mercenaries and traders from all over Asia and Europe visited or came to live in Arakan. This openness resulted in a wide variety of (primary) non-Arakanese language sources in a large number of different languages. In this study I have used a substantial corpus of published Portuguese sources, Spanish, Italian, and German texts; mostly written from Portuguese perspectives. Published and unpublished Persian chronicles have provided insights from Mughal India. But most of all the use of hitherto largely unused primary sources left by the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC), has allowed the construction of a narrative which explains the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom in a way that is very different from earlier historiography. VOC sources used in this dissertation cover the period from 1608 to 1682 and consist mainly of hundreds of *missiven* (letters) sent between Arakan and the Company's Asian headquarters at Batavia, the *dagh-registers* (diaries) kept at Arakan and Batavia, letters and resolutions of the *Heeren XVII*, the board of directors of the VOC in the Netherlands and *generale missiven* (letters) and resolutions of *Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden*, the governor-general and council at Batavia. Although only a few examples of the *dagh-registers* from Arakan have survived, they are of primary importance because they consist of day-to-day observations of VOC employees on Arakan, its trade and its politics. They provide verbatim reproductions of conversations between VOC employees and court officials and observations on Arakanese society. Originally there must have been a continuous collections of these *dagh-registers* for Arakan and even for Chittagong, but the majority of the Arakan diaries and all the Chittagong diaries have probably been destroyed during the early years of the nineteenth century on orders of the then Governor-General Herman Daendels.<sup>27</sup> The *dagh-registers* preserved in the National Archives (NA) at The Hague have survived because they were sent to the *Heeren XVII* in the Netherlands to serve as background information for the *generale missiven* and the copies of the *missiven* sent from Arakan to Batavia. The bulk of the VOC material on Arakan is contained in the *missiven*. Copies of the *missiven* sent from Arakan to Batavia were in general forwarded to the Dutch Republic to provide the Board of the VOC with the necessary information for their policy decisions. These letters refer in the first place to the commercial

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<sup>27</sup> J.A. van der Chijs, *Inventaris van 's Lands Archief te Batavia (1602-1816)* (Batavia, 1882), p. iv and M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, R. Raben and H. Spijkerman eds., *De archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie. The archives of the Dutch East India Company (1602-1795)* (The Hague, 1992), p. 73.

situation in Arakan and the results of the VOC's investments in the Arakanese markets. They provide information on the market structure, give analyses of market forces and describe the other players on the market. But this is only part of the information contained in these letters. They usually also provide a synopsis of the information contained in the *dagh-register*, they give an overview of the situation at the Mrauk U court and provide information on Arakan's relations with its neighbours - especially when these might impair the Companies trade in Arakan. Apart from the Company's sources, seventeenth century Dutch and other European travel literature has also provided a wealth of information.

Although this dissertation is therefore for a significant part based on non-Arakanese language sources, I have tried to present the reader with a distinct Arakanese perspective on the development of the political and economic history of the Mrauk U kingdom. This has been possible thanks to the recent publication of the groundbreaking dissertation on Arakanese history based primarily on Arakanese historiography by Jacques Leider. Leider has produced a truly monumental monograph on Arakanese history from the early fifteenth to the late eighteenth century, *Le royaume d'Arakan, Birmanie. Son histoire politique entre le début du XV<sup>e</sup> et la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.<sup>28</sup> Leider's work is the first attempt to present an overall picture of Arakanese history according to modern standards. Leider has incorporated in his study a rigorous critique of the available Arakanese historiography, making his book indispensable for anyone wishing to study Arakanese history. Michael Charney's innovative research on the formation of religious identities in Arakan, also based largely on Arakanese chronicles, has also proved valuable in this respect.<sup>29</sup>

### Outline

The first Chapter of this dissertation deals with the geographical context and more specifically Arakan's place in the trading networks of the Bay of Bengal. This first Chapter seeks to identify a useful construct to approach Arakanese history, and will look specifically at concepts such as 'The Indian Ocean' or the 'Bay of Bengal' as ways to situate Arakan's historical development in a broader context. The Chapters that follow provide a detailed and chronological perspective on the history of Arakan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter two will start with a description of the early years of the Mrauk U kingdom, followed by an analysis of the impact of the arrival of the Portuguese in Arakan. The reigns of the Arakanese kings Man Pa and Man Phalaung will be discussed as well as the first battles between the Arakanese and the Mughals. In this second Chapter the relationship

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<sup>28</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*.

between Arakan, Bengal and the growing community of Portuguese adventurers in the Bay of Bengal will be the central theme. The Chapter will describe the collapse of the Bengal sultanate and the subsequent rise to power of the Arakanese kingdom. At the same time the Mughals entered Bengal and came into contact with the Arakanese. The Mughal invasion of Bengal would spark a Ninety Years War between the Arakanese and the Mughals, with both sides wanting to exploit Bengal's riches. The role of the Portuguese community in Arakan and Bengal will receive special attention.

The third Chapter is devoted to the reign of king Man Raja-kri. During the reign of this king Arakan's relationship with the Portuguese changed rapidly. If the Portuguese were at first seen as just another kind of mercenaries, they soon developed into allies with a local powerbase. This dramatic change prompted Arakanese fears over growing Portuguese influence in the area and led in turn to several punitive expeditions by Man Raja-kri to local Portuguese communities. Man Raja-kri's own position indeed was far from safe as Arakanese pretenders to the throne allied themselves with these Portuguese, as did rival local lords. At the same time the Mughals marched through Bengal with varying success. The Mughal advance led to a series of armed engagements with the Arakanese, both parties slowly converging on the Dhaka area. In Chapter three it will also become apparent that the success of the Mughal campaign in Bengal was not matched by a comparable westward advance of Arakanese influence beyond the Brahmaputra. Although Man Raja-kri found a trustworthy ally in Raja Ananta Manik of Bhalua, it appears that after a military debacle in Lower Burma in 1608, he had his hands more than full with rebellions in his own kingdom.

In Chapter four we will see how from 1610, three sons of Man Raja-kri: Man Nui, Cakrawate and the future king Man Khamaung fought each other in and around Chittagong in a succession struggle for the Arakanese crown that lasted for almost three years. Man Khamaung was successful in consolidating the hold of the Mrauk U kingdom on south-eastern Bengal and restoring order in Arakan itself. The decisive 1615 battle with a Portuguese fleet sponsored by the *Estado da Índia* on the river Kaladan closed the door to Portuguese ambitions in Arakan. On top of this Man Khamaung also successfully withstood successive Mughal and Burmese attempts to invade Arakan.

Chapter five will start with the entrance of the rebellious Mughal prince Shah Jahan into Bengal in 1623. The Mughal governor of Bengal Ibrahim Khan remained loyal to the Mughal emperor Jahangir and died in a battle, trying to prevent the prince to enter Bengal. The resulting unstable political situation in Bengal opened the gates for a series of devastating invasions by the Arakanese. In 1626 the Arakanese king Sirisudhammaraja sacked Dhaka,

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<sup>29</sup> Michael W. Charney, *Where Jambudipa and Islamdom converged: Religious change and the emergence of Buddhist communalism in early modern Arakan (fifteenth to nineteenth centuries)* (PhD thesis: The University of Michigan, 1999).

setting fire to the city and leading the population away as slaves to Arakan. The Mughal emperor appointed a quick succession of governors which served to further destabilize Bengal. The death of Jahangir in October 1627 again had a negative impact on the Mughal's capability to rule effectively in Bengal.<sup>30</sup> The sack of Dhaka initiated the collapse of Mughal authority in eastern Bengal. Following the sack of Dhaka Bengal would pay a heavy tribute to Arakan.

On the Burmese front the Arakanese, in a loose alliance with the king of Siam, were at war with the Burmese king Anauketlun from c. 1610.<sup>31</sup> This I will argue finally resulted in the resettlement of the Burmese capital from Pegu to Ava in 1634. During the reign of Sirisudhammaraja there was a flurry of diplomatic activities coinciding with the start of royal trading missions emanating from the Arakanese court to the ports in the Bay of Bengal. One of the results of this activity was the permanent settlement of a VOC factory in Arakan, although the VOC was unwilling to commit itself in a military alliance with Arakan.

In 1635, following the great famine of 1631-1634, Sirisudhammaraja's official coronation finally took place. Arakan's power had reached its zenith.<sup>32</sup> At this point in time Arakanese military power was deemed so effective that the Portuguese *Viso-Rey* in Goa asked the Arakanese king for help in an attempted recovery of Hugli in 1633 from where the Portuguese had been forcefully removed a year earlier.<sup>33</sup> Arakanese fleets operated freely in coastal waters from Bengal to Tenasserim. In both cases the expansion of Arakanese influence prompted her enemies to retract their capitals further inland. The Mughals felt so insecure in Dhaka that the seat of the Bengal *subahdar* was moved as far inland as Rajmahal.

In 1638, three years after his coronation, Sirisudhammaraja suddenly died. The events leading up to his death are a much debated issue in Arakanese historiography. The upheaval following the death of Sirisudhammaraja precisely at the turn of the first millennium of the Arakanese era seems thus to have been anticipated in Arakanese society for a long period of time and today is still perceived by the Arakanese to be a decisive moment in Arakanese history.<sup>34</sup> The revolution following the death of the king in 1638 should indeed be seen as the turning point in Mrauk U history.<sup>35</sup>

In Chapter six the rule of Narapati-kri and his nephew Satuidhammaraja (1645-1652) will be analyzed. Narapati-kri was during his reign confronted with uprisings emanating from

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<sup>30</sup> 'In Bengalen is voor ons niets te doen aangesien dit lant nogh geheel en al in oorlogh staat.' Letter from Marten IJbrantsz to Coen, dated Pulicat 30 July 1628. H.T. Colenbrander ed., *Jan Pietersz. Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf in Indië* 7 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1919-1953), pp. 7:1350-1352.

<sup>31</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 2:236.

<sup>32</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 251 : L'apogée de la puissance militaire (1622-1652).

<sup>33</sup> *Dagh-register* 1633-1634, pp. 241-242 entry for 8 February 1634.

<sup>34</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 149.

<sup>35</sup> Stephan van Galen, 'Arakan at the turn of the First Millennium of the Arakanese Era' in Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider eds., *The Maritime frontier of Burma. Exploring political, cultural and commercial interaction in the Indian Ocean world, 1200-1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp. 151-162.

the ever more powerful community of Arakanese and Portuguese in south-eastern Bengal. These groups had direct access to Bengal's riches and therefore became more influential and assertive. In an attempt to curb the power of his Bengal frontier the Arakanese king initiated a policy of depopulation of south-eastern Bengal. The king hoped the resettlement of large groups from the Chittagong area to the plains of the Kaladan would eventually strengthen the Mrauk U king's position. This policy ended in disaster and rather served the opposite effect. The Arakanese king gradually lost his control over this part of Bengal. With the death of Narapati-kri in 1645 and the succession of Satuidhammaraja a gradual restoration of central authority in the Arakanese kingdom can be observed, not however a complete restoration of Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal.

In Chapter seven we will discuss the final phase in the decline of the Mrauk U kingdom during the reign of king Candasudhammaraja (1652-1685). Candasudhammaraja was 13 or 14 when he succeeded his father Satuidhammaraja as king of Arakan in 1652. The reign of Candasudhammaraja would last until his death in 1685. It is during this period that the resettlement programme and destruction of Chittagong would culminate in the loss of Chittagong to the Mughal empire and eventually even result in the destruction of the Mrauk U kingdom as a whole. The rosy picture that is today generally painted of Candasudhammaraja's reign as the height and culmination of the Mrauk U dynasty seems to have been based primarily on one source, the seventeenth century travelogue of the Dutch physician Wouter Schouten.<sup>36</sup> In Chapter seven it will become clear that the reign of Candasudhammaraja was all but peaceful and should rather be seen as the last phase of a long decline that had set in with the usurpation of the Mrauk U throne in 1638 by Narapati-kri. The Arakanese kingdom finally collapsed after the reign of Waradhammaraja (1685-1692) when Mrauk U ceased to be a threat to Mughal supremacy in Bengal.

In Chapters two to seven, the Ninety Years' War (c.1574 to 1666) between the Arakanese and the Mughals over south-eastern Bengal is the central theme in the discussion of the rise and demise of the Mrauk U kingdom. In Chapter eight it will be argued that the control over south-eastern Bengal, the economic centre of Bengal during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was the cork on which the Arakanese kingdom thrived. Maurice Collis, San Shwe Bu, D.G.E. Hall, Michael Charney and Jacques Leider all have suggested that trade provided the Arakanese kings with revenues that enabled them to consolidate their hold over other local centres in the Arakanese littoral and which were also an important instrument in the expansion of the Arakanese kingdom.<sup>37</sup> These assumptions have until now been based on

<sup>36</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 287-288 and *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 417-418; Maurice Collis and San Shwe Bu, 'Arakan's place in the civilization of the Bay: a study of coinage and foreign relations', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15.1 (1925), pp. 34-51; Hall, 'Studies in Dutch relations', pp. 1-31; Charney, 'Rise of a mainland trading state', pp. 1-4.

a more or less superficial understanding of the mechanisms of Arakanese trade. Chapter eight will attempt to provide a more detailed analysis of the development of trade in Arakan during the seventeenth century. The discussion will focus on the slave and rice trade and compare royal revenues from trade with the estimated tax income from south-eastern Bengal. The Mughal estimates of the Bengal revenues provide a clear illustration of the wealth of eastern Bengal. It will be argued that Arakan itself only permitted a small scale trade that paled into significance with the incomes derived from Bengal. The rice trade as the central pillar of the Arakanese economy will also be discussed. The extremely low price of rice in Arakan should, apart from the favourable climate, also be attributed to the use of slave labour. Concerning the slave trade I will suggest that the demand for slaves by the VOC eventually led to a fundamental change in the nature of the slave trade in Arakan. Before the early seventeenth century the trade in human beings mainly was a by-product of war or a result of poverty. It was a trade driven by supply. The need for cheap labour for Batavia and the Spice Islands created a stable and almost insatiable demand for slaves. This demand would fundamentally change the Arakanese slave trade. Dutch demand created a constant and predictable market for slaves in Arakan. This new market stimulated the Portuguese *chatins* operating under the umbrella of the Arakanese king to conduct regular raids on Bengali villages in the Ganges delta.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF THE ARAKAN-BENGAL CONTINUUM

After the collapse of the colonial empires following World War II historians have struggled to identify coherent regional spaces in Asian Studies to gain a better grasp on a variety of issues such as processes of state formation, trade, economics, and civilization. The common drive behind these efforts was the success of comparable studies in European historiography where such (supra) regional views produced remarkable gains in the understanding of the past.<sup>1</sup> As a result of these efforts notions of South Asia or Southeast Asia developed helping scholars to interpret historical developments in a broader context. A. Reid's theories on the 'Age of Commerce' and the 'Seventeenth century crisis in Southeast Asia' are influential examples following such a regional approach.<sup>2</sup> As a side-effect of the regionalization of Asian Studies areas such as Arakan, straddling the arguably anachronistic boundaries between South- and Southeast Asia, were marginalized in the discourse on Asian history.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1990s a paradigm shift occurred inspired by the works of historians like K.N. Chaudhuri and D. Lombard who introduced concepts such as the 'Indian Ocean' or the 'Bay of Bengal'.<sup>4</sup> Chaudhuri for example sought to construct an Asian *Méditerranée* based

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<sup>1</sup> The most famous European construct of a so-called explanatory space remains of course Fernand Braudel's forceful exposition on the *Méditerranée* as a homogenous area of enquiry. In this and other works Braudel and the historians of the Annales school stressed the importance of the 'material infrastructure' on history and they developed notions such as *longue durée* and *civilisation matérielle*. F. Braudel, 'Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée', *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations* 13 (1958), pp. 725-752; Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* 2 vols. 3rd ed. (Paris, 1976), pp. 13-17; Idem, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme XVe-XVIIIe siècle* 3 vols. (Paris, 1979) I, *Le possible et l'impossible*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Reid, 'An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.1 (1990); A. Reid, 'The seventeenth-century crisis in Southeast Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.4 (1990), pp. 639-659; Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680* 2 vols (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993); Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era. Trade, power, and belief* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993). Reid, *The last stand of Asian autonomies. Responses to modernity in the diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea 1750-1900* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Reid's theories have received fundamental and detailed criticism with regard to periodization and regional coherence. For a good summary see Victor Lieberman, *Strange parallels. Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800-1830. Volume 1: Integration on the mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 15-21. See also Niels Steensgaard, 'The seventeenth century crisis and the unity of Eurasian History', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.4 (1990), pp. 683-697; V. Lieberman, 'Was the Seventeenth Century a Watershed in Burmese History?', Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*; Lieberman, 'An Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia? Problems of Regional coherence A review article', *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.3 (1995), pp. 796-807; Lieberman, 'Mainland Archipelagic parallels and contrasts c. 1750 1850', Reid *The last stand of Asian autonomies*. and J. van Goor, 'Review of Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce', *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 153 (1997), pp. 445-454.

<sup>4</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean. An economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); D. Lombard, *Le carrefour Javanais. Essai d'histoire globale* 3 vols. (Paris, 1990), pp. 1:13-19. See also S. Chandra ed., *The Indian Ocean: Explorations in History, Commerce, and Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1987).



on an analysis of trade and communication in the Indian Ocean. The idea was grounded on Braudel's interpretative trinity of region, structure, and period. Chaudhuri wanted to bring out the underlying cohesion of the Indian Ocean and the contrasting nature of its different civilizations by integrating specialized research into what he called 'a general mosaic of interpretation'.<sup>5</sup> Chaudhuri showed the significant degree to which the trading networks of the Indian Ocean were integrated into a genuine regional commercial culture, which formed an *économie-monde* of its own. Following this network oriented approach Jos Gommans and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have argued that within the Indian Ocean the Bay of Bengal constituted a distinct unity before the onset of high colonialism in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> It is their contention that only then Western technology, shipping and communication had developed sufficiently to break up established patterns of trade that depended on the monsoon.<sup>7</sup> Gommans and Subrahmanyam rightly stressed the ongoing characteristics of openness and mobility in the context of an open frontier region. The Bay of Bengal in this view should be seen as a historical entity united by the system of the monsoon.

As a result of this new focus on the Bay of Bengal studies appeared which analyzed more in detail historical developments along the shores of the Bay of Bengal.<sup>8</sup> The studies which were the result of the paradigm-shift from the post-colonial Area Studies approach to a more network oriented approach clearly pointed at gaps in our historical knowledge of regions such as Arakan that had earlier been neglected. In 1999 this realization gave rise to the Amsterdam conference on Coastal Burma which sought to transgress national, disciplinary, and linguistic boundaries in order to be able to reassert Arakan's place on the historical map of the Bay of Bengal.<sup>9</sup> Following a similar approach the present Chapter seeks to provide a basic understanding of Arakan's economic geography and its place in the Bay of Bengal. This understanding is essential if we are to interpret Arakan's historical development properly.

It is the focus on the Bay of Bengal which tied the various regions of the Arakanese littoral and south-eastern Bengal together and which characterized the rhythm of life in this part of the Indian Ocean. The Arakanese littoral and south-eastern Bengal in the first place formed

<sup>5</sup> Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> J. Gommans, 'Trade and Civilization around the Bay of Bengal, c. 1650-1800', 19.3 *Itinerario* (1995), pp. 82-108. S. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies* 31.3 (1997), pp. 735-762.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Peter Klein, 'The China Seas and the World Economy between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Changing Structures of Trade', Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich ed., *Interactions in the World Economy: Perspectives from International Economic History* (New York, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Om Prakash and Denys Lombard eds., *Commerce and culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> The Amsterdam conference was an initiative of Jos Gommans and the present author and was sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The proceedings were published as: Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider eds., *The Maritime frontier of Burma. Exploring political, cultural and commercial*

an environmental continuum.<sup>10</sup> The Arakan-Bengal continuum forms a homogenous area wound up in the trading networks of the Bay of Bengal and has a climate and geography fundamentally different from the plains of the Ganges and the Irrawaddy on the north-western and south-eastern end. Although overland travel in the Arakan-Bengal continuum was made difficult by steep and rugged mountain chains, the numerous intersecting rivers and the shallow coastal waters provided an excellent infrastructure for trade and communication. South-eastern Bengal and Arakan together are some of the rainiest places on the planet. The Arakan littoral and south-eastern Bengal share an extremely high level of rainfall, reaching on average five hundred centimetres per year, which forms a sharp contrast with the much drier plains of the Ganges and the Irrawaddy.<sup>11</sup> The heavy rainfall and the fertile river valleys also supported higher population densities and a remarkable agricultural surplus during the early modern period.

South-eastern Bengal and Arakan provide secondly a classic example of what J.C. Heesterman has termed the “inner frontier”; where tribal peoples of hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, fishermen, and pastoral nomads in the jungles of the delta and the forest and hill tracts were separated from sedentary rice farmers of the coastal and riverine floodplains. Control over such a frontier area would enable a warrior kingdom like Arakan to exploit the best of both worlds, the mobile manpower of the deltaic jungles and the riches of Bengal’s weavers and rice farmers.<sup>12</sup>

Literary activity at the Arakanese court supports the idea that Arakan and south-eastern Bengal also on a cultural level formed a continuum.<sup>13</sup> At the Mrauk U court Bengali literature flourished.<sup>14</sup> Bengali poets like Alaol and Daulat Qazi translated cosmopolitan Persian literature to the local idiom.<sup>15</sup> It seems that this ‘vernacularisation’ aimed towards a

*interaction in the Indian Ocean world, 1200-1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>11</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>12</sup> J.C. Heesterman, ‘Two types of spatial boundaries’ in E. Cohen, M. Lissak and U. Almagor eds., *Comparative social dynamics: essays in honour of S.N. Eisenstadt* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 59-72; Heesterman, ‘Warrior, Peasant and Brahmin’, *Modern Asian Studies* 29.3 (1995), pp. 637-654 and Jos Gommans, ‘The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c. A.D. 1100-1800’, *Journal of World History* 9.1 (1998), pp. 1-5, 14-17, 22-23 and Gommans, ‘The Eurasian frontier after the First Millennium A.D.: Reflections along the fringe of time and space’, *The Medieval History Journal* 1.1 (1998), pp. 125-143. See also E.R. Leach, ‘The frontiers of “Burma”’, *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 3.1 (1960), pp. 49-73.

<sup>13</sup> Thibaut d’Hubert, ‘The Status of Bengali Language and the Emergence of Bengal Literature in Seventeenth century Mrauk U, Capital of the Kingdom of Arakan (Myanmar)’ paper read at the 19th European Conference of Modern South Asian Studies (ECMSAS) at Leiden University, 27-30 June 2006. See also d’Hubert, ‘Alaol’s poetry as a source for Arakanese history’ Arakan conference Chulalongkorn University Bangkok 2005.

<sup>14</sup> M.E. Haq, ‘Literary activity in the adjoining State courts, chapter 4’ in *Muslim Bengali literature* (Karachi, 1957), pp. 141-152. Satyendra Nath Ghosal, ‘Missing links in Arakan history’, E.M. Haq ed., *Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad commemoration volume. Essays on archaeology, art history, literature and philosophy of the Orient, dedicated to the memory of Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad (1869-1953)* (Dakha, 1972), pp. 255-265; Ghosal, ‘Arakan as pictured in the Bengali literature of the seventeenth century’, *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 45 (1959), pp. 404-410.

<sup>15</sup> S.K. Chatterji, *The origin and development of the Bengali language* (Calcutta, 1926); S. Sen, *History of Bengali literature* (Delhi, 1960).

better understanding of the cosmopolitan Persian literary culture by its patrons, mostly Muslim merchants and court officials living in Arakan. In a wider Bay of Bengal perspective this shows interesting similarities to the activities of poets in, for instance, Coromandel. According to Thibaut d'Hubert, the poet Alaol, after his (forced) move from Bengal to Arakan, shifted from north-Indian regional cultural references to more widespread Persian cultural references. As Alaol's patrons were involved in trade, this suggests the existence of a network of Muslim notables involved in trade who shared a similar interest in Persian literature. Subrahmanyam has shown that these trading networks were characterized by Persian culture that underlay the relationships between the various protagonists engaged in trade, as well as the Persianization of the protocol at the courts of Buddhist kings in Southeast Asia.<sup>16</sup> Literary life in Aceh during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can also be seen to conform to these ideas. Alaol's translation of the 'Alexander Story' was followed by the composition of a Malay version of this story and the adoption of the name Iskandar, Iskandar Muda, Iskandar Thani, by sultans of Aceh.<sup>17</sup> One should add to these examples linking trade and cultural history, the striking parallel between the adaptations from Persian into the local idiom of the Muslim nobility in Golkonda during the seventeenth century and the phenomenon observed in Mrauk U at the same period. Similarly the spread of the cult of Pir Badr from south-eastern Bengal to Arakan stresses the unity of the region. Pir Badr was renowned as a patron saint to sailors and a disciple from a Firdausi Sufi, who died c. 1440. Although Pir Badr was a Muslim, a large part of his following in the seventeenth century, and probably earlier, came from Buddhists and animists from south-eastern Bengal and Arakan. Symbolic tombs, *mokon*, sprang up along the Arakan-Bengal littoral and formed the centre of this cult.<sup>18</sup> Mrauk U architecture was also influenced by Bengali architecture although Burmese influences would dominate from the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Conversely the spread of Arakanese Buddhism in the form of the Mahamuni cult to south-eastern Bengal shows that Arakanese concepts of Buddhism accompanied Arakanese expansion in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>20</sup> The revered Mahamuni image was the palladium of the

<sup>16</sup> S. Subrahmanyam, 'Persianization and 'Mercantilism' in Bay of Bengal history, 1400-1700', S. Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History. From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 45-79.

<sup>17</sup> P. Gaeffke, 'Alexander and the Bengali Sufis', A.W. Enwistle and F. Mallison eds. *South Asian devotional literature research papers 1988-1991* (Paris 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Bengali: *Mokon* from the Persian *Maqam*. The shrines were thus known as *Badrmokon*. In VOC sources as *Modder Magon*. Subrahmanyam, 'Persianization', p. 56. S. Dasgupta, *Obscure religious cults* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Calcutta, 1962); A. Roy, *The Islamic syncretistic tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Chihara Daigoro, *Hindu-Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 254-256.

<sup>20</sup> F. Hamilton, 'An account of the frontier between Ava and the Part of Bengal adjacent to the Karnaphuli river', *Edinburgh Journal of Science* 3.4 (1825), pp. 32-44, 38. R.H.S. Hutichnson, *An account of the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (Calcutta, 1906), pp. 171-176; R.B. Barua, 'Some important festivals of the Buddhists in East Pakistan', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 10.1 (1965), pp. 15-34; R.B. Barua, 'Buddhist shrines and monasteries in Chittagong', E.M. Haq ed., *Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad commemoration volume. Essays on archaeology, art history, literature and philosophy of the Orient, dedicated to the memory of Abdul Karim*

Mrauk U kingdom and is still regarded as the epitome of Arakanese Buddhism. The image is in Arakan and Burma widely regarded to be the only true copy of the Buddha in existence. According to tradition the life-like image was cast during a visit to Arakan of the historical Buddha Gautama, who is said to have breathed life into the statue. The possession of the Mahamuni image afforded the Mrauk U kings great prestige in the Theravada Buddhist world. On several occasions Burmese kings invading Arakan tried to remove the Mahamuni but all failed until the conquest of Arakan in 1784.<sup>21</sup>

In the following pages the influence of geography and climate on trade in the Arakan-Bengal continuum will be discussed. I will first describe the impact of geography on the economic possibilities of the Arakan-Bengal continuum. In the second part of this Chapter the effects of the monsoon climate on trade in the Bay of Bengal in general and Arakan more in particular will be discussed.

### 1.1 Geography

In terms of geography the Arakanese littoral can be roughly divided in four zones. The central zone with the riverine planes of the Mayu, Kaladan and Lemro rivers, known by its classical name of Dhanyawati, the two larger islands Cheduba (Man Aung in Arakanese) and Ramree (Ram brè in Arakanese), classically known as Meghawati and Rammawati, and to the south Sandoway (Sam twè in Arakanese), known classically as Dwarawati.<sup>22</sup> West of the Arakanese littoral, the areas classically known as Vanga and Harikela share many geological and climatologic characteristics with the Arakanese littoral, but were not a part of Arakan proper.<sup>23</sup> In the south of the littoral a mountain chain known as the Arakan Yoma reaches the shores of the Bay of Bengal. A large part of the Arakanese littoral is cut off from the Irrawaddy plain by these mountains with peaks rising up to 3,000 metres. In the north no such

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*Sahitya-Visarad (1869-1953)* (Dhaka, 1972), pp.167-175. H. Bechert, 'Zur Geschichte des Theravada Buddhismus in Ostbengalen', H. Härtel ed., *Beiträge zur Indieforschung. Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Berlin, 1977); L. Bernot, *Les paysans Arakanais du Pakistan Orientale. L'histoire, le monde végétal et l'organisation sociale des réfugiés Marma (Mog)* 2 vols. (Paris, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> The Mahamuni image is now in Mandalay where it is regarded as one of the most sacred images in Burma. Pamela Gutman, *Burma's lost kingdoms: Splendours of Arakan* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2001), pp. 30-32.

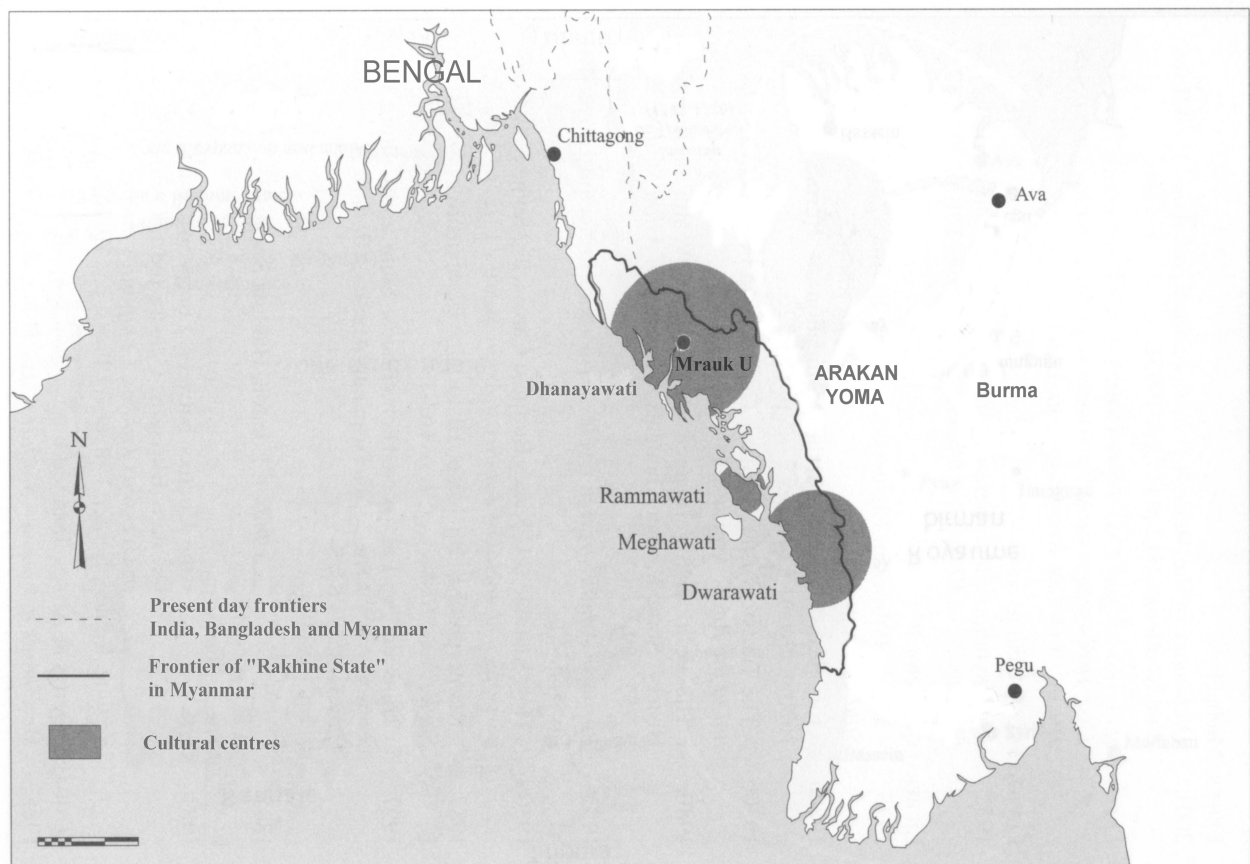
<sup>22</sup> Charles Paton, 'Historical and statistical sketch of Aracan', *Asiatic Researches* 16 (1828). Leider, 'Taxation et groupes de service sous la royauté arakanaise. Un rapport d'enquête de 1803 dans un manuscrit birman de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris', *Aséanie* 1 (1998), pp. 67-89, p. 75. BL OIOC, Mss. Eur. C 13, *Copy of a journal of progress and observations during the continuance of the deputation from Bengal to Ava in 1795 in the dominions of the Barma monarch by dr. F. Buchanan*, fols. 172, 176-177.

<sup>23</sup> The territorial names Vanga and Harikela probably refer to slightly different areas in different periods of history, but broadly it may be said that they denote the areas in the south and south-eastern part of present Bangladesh. Vanga may have extended to areas in southern West Bengal in the earlier period, but the area within the two main streams of the Ganges (from the Bhagirathi to the Padma-Meghna) formed the core of this territorial unit. A.M. Chowdhury, 'Vanga' in *Banglapedia. National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh 2006: [www.banglapedia.org](http://www.banglapedia.org)).

barrier with the Bengal plain exists.<sup>24</sup> The coastal strip that forms the Arakan littoral is nowhere more than a hundred kilometres wide before it reaches the Arakan Yoma, leaving the littoral with its many rivers and islands very much open to the influences of the Bay of Bengal and closed off from Burma proper.

The Chittagong Hills constitute the only significant hill system in eastern Bengal and, in effect, are the western fringe of the north-south mountain ranges of Burma and eastern India. The Chittagong Hills rise steeply to narrow ridge lines, generally no wider than thirty metres, with altitudes from six hundred to nine hundred metres above sea level. At 1,052 metres altitude, the highest elevation in the area is found at Mowdok, in the south-eastern part of the hills. Fertile valleys lie between the hills, which generally run north-south. West of the Chittagong Hills is a broad plain, cut by rivers draining into the Bay of Bengal, which rises to a final chain of low coastal hills, mostly below 200 metres, that attain a maximum elevation of 350 metres. In this wet coastal plain were located the cities of Chittagong in the north and Ramu in the south.

### The Arakan littoral and Bengal<sup>25</sup>



<sup>24</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 501.

*The Arakan littoral*

In Arakan agriculture centred on rice cultivation.<sup>26</sup> Rice was sown in the monsoon and reaped in winter. Dry-weather paddy cultivation did not exist in Arakan. Three types of paddy could be distinguished. *Kaukyin*, or early paddy was grown on the highest lands and reaped between c. 15 October and 15 November. This kind of rice was used for domestic consumption. *Kauklat* paddy ripened a little later and was grown on the lands of medium height. This kind was reaped between 15 November and 15 December to be sold on the market. *Kaukkyi* was the main crop and was sown on the lowest and most productive lands. *Kaukkyi* rice was mainly grown for sale on the market and was reaped between 15 December and 15 January. The harvest dates of course depended on the weather, but they represent the times during which the bulk of the harvest was made. Transplanting rice was not the custom.<sup>27</sup> In the upland tracts the lands lying in the river valleys were considerably enriched by the silt brought down from the hills. The level tracts in the upper reaches of the large rivers were enriched by the fresh water inundations which took place during the rains. The banks of the lower reaches of the large rivers were generally low and the adjoining country liable to inundations. Because the water here was brackish the floods left deposits of salt not beneficial to cultivation. Where salt water got into the fields no cultivation could take place till the land was securely protected by embankments or *bunds*. Lands protected by these *bunds* needed one or two years to wash the salt out of the ground before they could be productive.<sup>28</sup> Mrauk U is just situated at the point where the rivers turn from brackish to fresh water. The lands around Mrauk U are therefore ideally suited for rice cultivation.<sup>29</sup> Below Urittaung the soil is not suited for rice cultivation, but provides excellent grazing for cattle and is suitable for betel-vine cultivation.

In the early modern period Mrauk U functioned primarily as a central mart for locally grown rice and the cotton cultivated by hill tribes. The hinterland of the capital city Mrauk U was formed by the plains of the Mayu, Kaladan and Lemro river systems. The functioning of Mrauk U as an entrepôt in the long-distance trade of the Bay of Bengal depended more on the political situation across the Arakan Yoma than on its autonomous ability to attract long-distance trade to the Dhanyawati area. The ruby trade from Upper Burma is a good example. Only in times of war between Lower and Upper Burmese polities was it worthwhile for long-

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion of the rice trade see Chapter 8.

<sup>27</sup> R.B. Smart, *Akyab District. Burma Gazetteer* (Rangoon, 1957), pp. 107-108. Smart based his conclusions on rice cultivation on settlement operations conducted in Arakan from the late nineteenth century. His observations on rice cultivation are generally in accordance with seventeenth century reports from Dutch VOC sources. Detailed information on the rice trade is provided in Chapter 8.

<sup>28</sup> Smart, *Akyab District*, pp. 109-111. Smart, *Report on the revision settlement operations in the Akyab district. Season 1913-1917* (Rangoon, 1918), pp. 79-142.

<sup>29</sup> R.B. Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India. With a Supplement by Dr Bayfield on the British Political Relations with Ava* repr. (Delhi, 1979), pp. 86-92.

distance traders to follow the hazardous and troublesome routes over the Arakan Yoma.<sup>30</sup> Ava could be reached from Mrauk U in fourteen or fifteen days by messengers. Traders would take more than a month to get their goods over the Yoma's to Upper Burma.<sup>31</sup> This is illustrated by events taking place in the early seventeenth century. The aggressive monopolistic policies of Felipe de Brito, the Portuguese ruler of Thanlyin in Lower Burma, forced ruby and other long-distance traders as for example the China traders, to seek alternative routes over the Arakan Yoma. As a result in 1603 and 1609 Man Raja-kri and the Burmese kings, Nyaungyan Min (1597-1606) and Anauk-pet-lun (1606-1628) agreed to combine efforts to keep the passes across the Yomas open and construct roads suitable for commercial intercourse.<sup>32</sup> As soon as the political situation changed with the defeat of De Brito, the recently opened passes were closed and the long distance-trade to Upper Burma and China again found its way through the Irrawaddy valley.<sup>33</sup>

Political considerations aside, the routes over the passes were extremely troublesome. To keep the passes open required continuous maintenance. So, although the trans-Yoma routes were not impassable, long-distance commerce was in normal circumstances certainly cheaper and quicker following the Irrawaddy than crossing the Yoma. This is illustrated by a statement from Hiram Cox, the English ambassador to Ava in 1799:

But an object of much more serious import to the trade of this place [Rangoon] than the above is the communication [...] over land by way of Arakan. To which place it is only seven days from the banks of the Irrawaddy. From Arakan the merchants go by boats to Chittagong and from there to Cossimbazar and Dhaka and all the original manufacture places. Here they purchase with silver smuggled out of the country their goods. They return by nearly the same route, employing the coolies of Arakan to carry their goods. This accounts for the fact that Calcutta goods are cheaper at Ava than at

<sup>30</sup> R.A. de Bulhão Pato ed., *Documentos Remittidos da India ou Livros das Monções publicados de ordem da classe de Sciencias Moraes, Politicas e Bellas-Lettras da academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa* 4 vols. (Lisbon, 1880-1893), pp 1 :173-178 and F. Guerreiro, *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas missões. Do Japão, China, Cataio, Tidore, Ternate, Ambóino, Malaca, Pegu, Bengala, Bisnagá, Maduré, Costa da Pescaria, Manar, Ceilão, Travancor, Malabar, Sodomala, Goa, Salcete, Lahor, Diu, Etiopia a alta ou Preste João, Monomotapa, Angola, Guiné, Serra Leoa, Cabo Verde e Brasil nos anos de 1600 a 1609. E do processo da conversão e cristandad daquelas partes: tirada das cartas que os missionários de la escreveram pelo padre Fernao Guerreiro* ed. Artur Viegas 3 vols. (Coimbra: Coimbra Imprensa da Universidade, 1930-1942), pp. 2:318.

<sup>31</sup> NA VOC 1062 Short note on Arakan by Samuel Kindt [Informatie in't corte toucherende voyage op Arracan] c. 1615., fol. 39-39v.

<sup>32</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> It was not Tibau's presence that ended the Arakan-Ava trade, but the outbreak of war between the two states Charney, 'Crisis and reformation', pp. 194-198. See Peter Floris to T. Aldworth, Masulipatnam 17-6-1614 in F. Danvers and W. Foster eds., *Letters received by the East India Company from its servants in the East, 1602-1615* 3 vols. (London, 1896-1898), p. 2:61; J.H. van Linschoten, *Itinerario. Voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien 1579-1592* 2 vols. ed. H. Kern (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910), p.1:67; NA VOC 1059; 1062; 1065.

Rangoon, [because] along the river [Irrawaddy] there are many tolls and the duty in Rangoon is very high.<sup>34</sup>

Early British reports produced for military purposes conclude that the only pass able to cope with a large number of cattle was that of Am and even this needed meticulous management to make it passable for trade.<sup>35</sup>

While as an upstream port Mrauk U did not possess strategic advantages over other local Arakanese centres in Rammawati, Meghawati or Dwarawati, its large agricultural hinterland gave it a distinct advantage over these other core areas in terms of manpower and wealth. Situated at the foot of the mountains overlooking the two largest agricultural plains in Arakan, those of the Kaladan and Lemro valleys, Mrauk U provided local farmers with a central and safe marketplace to sell their produce. The Arakanese capital was not as its predecessors at Laungkrak and Vesali situated in the middle of the riverine plains, making them more prone to the attack of hill tribes. The Mrauk U rulers successfully pacified the hill tribes, thereby creating a more stable environment where agricultural surpluses could be produced and exported.<sup>36</sup>

### *South-eastern Bengal*

The Chittagong area is bounded in the north by the Feni river. Its southern boundary is the Naf river. The plains in between are connected through rugged mountain passes and rivers. The natural divisions of the district are the four main rivers, the Feni, Karnafuli, Matamuhuri and Naf. The Karnafuli river which flows from the Blue Mountains to the sea is a major highway and connects the Hill tracts with Chittagong. It is on this river that Chittagong is situated. Opposite Chittagong stood the town of Dianga. The Matamuhuri has an extensive and fertile delta, here the city of Cukkara (Chakaria or Chocoria) was situated. Further south on the banks of the Bak-khali stood the town Ramu.<sup>37</sup>

The volatile environment of the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta is a major factor to be considered when we reconstruct the relationship between Arakan and Bengal. The movement of people, processes of sedentarization and state formation are all strongly influenced by the constraints imposed by nature in the Bengal delta. In this region geographical changes over time have been, and still are of momentous importance. Without wanting to promote a kind

<sup>34</sup> H. Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire* (London, 1821), pp. 187-189.

<sup>35</sup> BL OIOC, Jenkins Collection Mss. Eur. F 257 vol. 1, R.B. Pemberton. and F. Jenkins, 'Survey of Arakan (Aeng pass) 1831. J. Leider, 'La route de Am (Arakan). Contribution à l'étude d'une route terrestre entre la Birmanie et le Golfe du Bengale', *Journal Asiatique* 282.2 (1994), pp. 335-370. Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1 :338-350.

<sup>36</sup> Charney, 'Rise of a mainland trading state', pp. 20-21.

<sup>37</sup> S.B. Qanungo, *A history of Chittagong vol.1 From ancient times down to 1761* (Chittagong, 1988), pp. 1-8.



of geographical determinism, it is still clear that Bengal's unique geography certainly played a central role in the economic development of the region. Eaton has argued that in the relatively brief period of c.1550-1575 this large delta saw significant changes. The western branches of the Ganges near Satgaon silted up. The river above Gaur, the capital of the Bengal sultanate, also silted up and stagnant waters caused so many diseases that the capital had to be abandoned.<sup>38</sup> According to Eaton during this period the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers converged and took the Padma-Meghna channel as their major outlet to the Bay of Bengal. Eaton has concluded that these changes linked south-eastern Bengal with northern India, and were quickly followed by political and economic integration with Mughal India. Eaton argues that because of the direct river communication that was suddenly possible between south-eastern Bengal and northern India the low costs of river transportation should have dramatically reduced prices of goods transported from the frontier to the heartlands of the empire.<sup>39</sup> It is however unlikely that the eastward displacement of the Ganges was so dramatic and happened in such a short period of time as Eaton has suggested. The maps used by Eaton to illustrate the quick eastward displacement of the Ganges are in the first place not suitable for this purpose. The map used by Eaton made by Gastaldi was printed in 1548, but was still largely based on the geography of Ptolemy (c. 150 AD). Gastaldi's maps of India were updated using modern travel accounts but are still fairly inaccurate and not suitable to determine changes in complex river systems such as the Ganges delta.<sup>40</sup> The 1666 'Van den Broecke map', the most detailed map used by Eaton, will be shown in Chapter 7 to have been based on a very limited survey of the area between Chittagong and Dhaka.<sup>41</sup> The majority of the delta is even on this mid-seventeenth century map labelled as 'very dirty and therefore unknown to us'. One might wonder then how accurate the depiction of the rivers emptying in the Bay of Bengal actually was.<sup>42</sup> On top of this it seems unlikely that changes in course of the main rivers would have resulted only as late as the sixteenth century in the situation which was described aptly by James Rennell for the eighteenth century:

<sup>38</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 194-197.

<sup>39</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>40</sup> L.C. Wroth, *The Early Cartography of the Pacific* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books, 1944), p. 155.

<sup>41</sup> NA VOC 1264, fol. 337-339 'Guide for a new route starting from the river of Arakan, north to Chittagong and Dhaka in Bengal and from there to the bar of Bellasor'.

<sup>42</sup> Apart from this, the copy of the Van den Broecke map used by Eaton is from the early eighteenth century published by François Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën, vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandelinge van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten, benevens eene wydlostige beschryvinge der Moluccos, Amboina, Banda, Timor, en Solor, Java en alle de eylanden onder dezelve landbestieringen behoorende : het Nederlands comptoir op Suratte, en de levens der groote Mogols; als ook een keurlyke verhandeling van 't wezentlykste, dat men behoort te weten van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengale, Mocha, Persien, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes of Macassar, China, Japan, Tayouan of Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Borneo, Bali, Kaap der Goede Hoop en van Mauritius*. 5 vols. (Dordrecht: Joannes van Braam, 1724-1726), vol. 5.1 Keurlyke beschryving van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengale, Mocha. A late seventeenth century example of the same map more accurately depicts how little was known to European cartographers of the Bengal delta between the mouths of the Padma and Hugli rivers. Isaak de Graaf, *Atlas Amsterdam* ed. Günter Schilder (Voorburg: Asia Maior/Atlas Maior, 2006), pp. 196-198.

The Ganges and Burrampooter rivers, together with their numerous branches and adjuncts, intersect the country of Bengal ... in such a variety of directions, as to form the most complete and easy inland navigation that can be conceived. So equally and admirably diffused are those natural canals, over a country that approaches nearly to a perfect plane, that, ..., we may safely pronounce, that every other part of the country, has, even in the dry season, some navigable stream within 25 miles farthest; and more commonly, within a third part of that distance.<sup>43</sup>

European maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth century do not show a dramatic change in the course of the Ganges, what is perhaps visible, is the formation of new lands at the mouth of the delta, in particular at end of the Meghna channel. The city of Chittagong situated at the south-eastern extremity of this delta gave the best access from the Bay of Bengal to the fertile lands near the most active part of the delta.<sup>44</sup> Its position at the entrance of this delta made control over Chittagong a major strategic objective for anyone wishing to control south-eastern Bengal. The main objective of the Ninety Years' War (c.1574 to 1666) between Arakan and the Mughals was control over the area between Dhaka and Chittagong, the economic heart of Bengal.

The function of Chittagong as one of the principal seaports for Bengal can be traced to Arab sources dating to the middle of the fifteenth century. This would contradict Eaton's view that the area became the economic centre of Bengal only in the late sixteenth century. In the navigational guides of mariners like Ibn Majid Chittagong is described as the largest port in Bengal.<sup>45</sup> The visit of an Imperial Chinese fleet in 1405 is further evidence of the function of Chittagong as an entrepôt earlier on.<sup>46</sup> The Portuguese became fully aware of the importance of Chittagong when they first ventured in this part of the Bay of Bengal. Early Portuguese sources depict the trade of Chittagong as the most important in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>47</sup> They called the area *Porto Grande*.<sup>48</sup> The importance of Chittagong has been

<sup>43</sup> J. Rennell, *Memoir of a map of Hindoostan; or the Mughal empire: with an introduction, illustrative of the geography and present division of that country: and a map of the countries situated between the heads of the Indian rivers, and the Caspian sea: also a supplementary map, containing the improved geography of the countries contiguous to the heads of the Indus* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1793), p. 335.

<sup>44</sup> As is most clearly expressed on a Mughal map that connects Hormuz, Lahor, Agra, and Patna with Chittagong as if they were all part of the Ganges delta. NA VEL 257.

<sup>45</sup> G.R. Tibbetts, *Arab navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese, being a translation of Kitab al-Fawa'id fi usul al bahr wa'l-qawa'id of Ahmad b. Majid al-Najdi* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971), p. 395. Abdul Karim, 'Chittagong Coast as described by Sidi Ali Chelebi a sixteenth century Turkish navigator', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* 16.3 (1971).

<sup>46</sup> J. Deloche, *Transport and Communications in India prior to steam locomotion* 2 vols. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 2:12-32; 2:117-126. Cf. S.C. Das, 'A note on the antiquity of Chittagong, compiled from the Tibetan works Pagsam Jon-Zan of Sumpa Khan-po and Kahbab Dun-dan of Lama Tara-Natha', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 67 (1898), pp. 20-28.

<sup>47</sup> Linschoten, *Itinerario*, pp. 1.63-72 ; S.B. Qanungo, *A history of Chittagong vol.1 From ancient times down to*

overlooked in recent times because of the location of the factories of the European trading companies on the River Hugli, but Chittagong was undoubtedly one of the principal ports of Bengal before the seventeenth century. Linschoten described it as the capital of Bengal.<sup>49</sup> The image of Chittagong as the entrance to, and economic centre of Bengal is vividly portrayed on early European maps.<sup>50</sup> On these maps the entrepôt on the River Karnafuli is given a prominent place, sometimes just labelled 'Bengal'.<sup>51</sup>

The arrival of the VOC in the Bay of Bengal provides more information on the role of Chittagong as a regional entrepôt. To establish the value of the different harbours in the Bay of Bengal, the *Heeren XVII*, or Court of Directors of the Dutch Company, sent out various fact-finding missions to ports like Pegu, Mrauk U, and Chittagong. The reports written at the end of these missions all point in the same general direction: Chittagong was *the* central emporium for the long distance trade in the eastern part of the Bay of Bengal. Its location at the confluence of two of the larger transport arteries of India, namely the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, meant that merchants from all over India used Chittagong as an entrepôt.<sup>52</sup>

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1761 (Chittagong, 1988), pp. 110-135, 347-358.

<sup>48</sup> According to Johan van Leenen who made the first accurate survey of the eastern Bengal delta Porto Grande was the name given by the Portuguese to what he called the river Brahmaputra and what should be identified on the basis of his survey as the Meghna channel. If we are to follow Van Leenen, Porto Grande was an epithet not used exclusively for Chittagong. NA VOC 1264, fol. 337-339 Guide for a new route starting from the river of Arakan than north to Chittagong and Dhaka in Bengal and from there to the bar of Bellasor, fol. 337.

<sup>49</sup> S. Subrahmanyam, 'Notes on the sixteenth century Bengal trade', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 24 (1987), pp. 265-289; O. Prakash, *European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 18-22. Linschoten, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:63-72.

<sup>50</sup> The prominence of Chittagong even found its way into Portuguese poetry. The poet Louis vaz de Camoes (c. 1524-1580) described it like this *Ve Cathigao, cidade das melhores. De Bengala, provincia que se preza. De Abundante; mas olha que esta posta. Para O Austro d'aqui virada a costa*. Quoted in Qanungo, *A history of Chittagong*, pp. 345-346.

<sup>51</sup> J. Rotz, *Book of Idrography* (1542), British Museum: Mss. Royal 20 E. ix; Anonymous (1508), *Portelano* British Museum: Mss. Egerton 2803; A. Cortesão ed., *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica* 6 vols. (Lisbon, 1960), p. 1:58.

<sup>52</sup> Pieter Willemsz., 'Informatie van de Bochte van Bengala en de Arracan gedaen door Pieter Willemsz. in Masulipatnam desen 25 Maij Anno 1608' {Information on the Bay of Bengal and Arakan by Pieter Willemsz, 25 May 1608} in J.K.J. de Jonge ed., *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië (1595-1610)* 16 Vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1862-1909), pp. 3:287-291.



Two Bengal maps based on the 1666 survey by Johan van Leenen. Top a map of the Bay of Bengal with the Arakan coast c. 1690 by Isaak de Graaf; bottom detail of the Dhaka to Chittagong area from Valentyn c. 1726.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The map from Valentijn is conventionally known as Mattheus van den Broecke's map, to whom it was dedicated by Johan van Leenen. It was made in 1666 and 1667 by Johan van Leenen who surveyed the Arakan littoral from the river Kaladan to Dhaka in Bengal. The map was until now erroneously dated 1660. Details of the survey are recorded in NA VOC 1264, fol. 337-339 'Guide for a new route starting from the river of Arakan, north to Chittagong and Dhaka in Bengal and from there to the bar of Bellasor'. De Graaf, *Atlas Amsterdam*, pp.

In the records of the English East India Company (EIC) the importance of Chittagong is also underlined. The unfortunate war the EIC launched against the Mughal empire at the end of the seventeenth century necessitated the search for a new location for the Company's factory. The Court of Directors favoured Chittagong as a base for their Bengal trade because it was so conveniently situated for trade, having a good deep-sea harbour and efficient connections with the Indian hinterland. They certainly preferred it to Calcutta, situated at the time in what was virtually deserted marshland.<sup>54</sup>

### *1.2 Climate: The Indian Ocean Monsoon and trade in the Bay of Bengal*

The monsoon system was of prime importance for the connections between the lands bordering the Bay of Bengal. The predictability and reliability of the monsoon facilitated and stimulated the voyages between the different emporia in the area. The monsoon system determined the kind, quality and quantity of the agrarian production in the different areas of the system. The monsoon system was thus of prime importance for trade around the Bay of Bengal. It meant that there existed a regular and predictable disequilibrium in the different emporia bordering on the Bay. At the same time this regularity promoted business in so far as it made trading voyages more predictable. Travellers could rely on a favourable wind at the same time every year to take them from Arakan to Banten or from Sumatra to Coromandel knowing for sure that in time the wind would change and allow them to sail back again. It is this element that in accordance with the derivation of monsoon from *mawsim* is one of the dominant features of the Asian monsoon in the pre-colonial period.<sup>55</sup>

The early Arab navigators that crisscrossed the seas of the Indian Ocean coined the term *mawsim* (monsoon: literally 'a fixed period') to describe the exact date for sailing from one harbour to another. The term did not yet have its present connotation, relating it to the time of year or the type of wind. A list of these departure dates was called *mawasim*, collectively *mawasim al-asfar*, or the seasons for travel. The navigational guides used by these early Arab merchants mainly consisted of these *mawasim*.<sup>56</sup>

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196-198 and Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, vol. 5.1.

<sup>54</sup> The fact that the English finally settled at Calcutta had more to do with Mughal policy than with free choice on the English side J. Charnock in Fort St. George to Court of Directors Oriental and India Office Collections: Original Correspondence E/3/47: folia 231-233; J. Haynes, A Copie of a Journall of our voyage from Bengal to Madras commencing on 8 November 1688, concluding on 3 March 1689 with letters received from and concerning Captain William Heath's transactions in Ye. Right Honourable Companies affaires British Museum: Mss. Egerton 283; H. Dodwell, *Records of Fort St. George. Letters from Fort St. George for 1688* (Madras: Government Press, 1918), pp. 44-45; C.M. Schmidt and H. Dodwell eds., *Records of Fort St. George. Diary and Consultation Book 1689* (Madras: Government Press, 1916), pp. 19,24. It is therefore perhaps not surprising to find Chittagong among the first areas to come under direct British administration after the battle of Plassey. K.K. Datta and H.N. Sinha eds., *Fort William-India House correspondence 1748-1759* 2 vols. (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1957-1958), pp. 2:66-67.

<sup>55</sup> Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, pp. 21-24, 98-118.

<sup>56</sup> G.R.P. Tibbetts, *Arab navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portugese, being a translation*

The monsoon divided the rhythm of life in a harbour city typically into three periods; the season for sailing, the season when the fleet returned home, and the period when the harbour was closed. The closed period offered the seamen time to clean and maintain the ships.<sup>57</sup> The southwest monsoon started in March on the east coast of Africa and slowly spread to the east. It reached the coasts of Gujarat and Sind at the end of May or early in June and finally fell on the coast of Bengal by late June. During the months of June and July the monsoon winds were at full force and all the harbours on the coast of India remained closed. Early in August the winds slackened and could be used for sailing again. At the end of September, starting with a period of rain that lasted approximately one week, this period came to an end.<sup>58</sup> The northeast monsoon started early in October in Bengal and reached Ceylon about one month later. The beginning of this monsoon period was usually announced by storms and even cyclones. The periods between the monsoons, the months of February, March and April were characterized by fluctuating winds that could be used to sail in north-western and south-eastern directions, something impossible during the monsoon itself. At the south of the Bay of Bengal the winds in this period could be extremely unpredictable making the route from Ceylon to Sumatra particularly difficult.<sup>59</sup>

At its eastern borders, where the Bay of Bengal flowed over into the Chinese seas, the monsoon system of the Bay of Bengal clashed with the Chinese monsoon. The fact that this system operated at a different pace necessitated shipping between the China seas and the Bay of Bengal to make a stop over in the ports of the Archipelago, reinforcing the importance of the two main shipping lanes, the Sunda and Melaka straits, between China and Eurasia.<sup>60</sup> Although this is not true on the same scale and in every instance for the division of the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal, similar arguments can be brought forward to argue that a trading venture between these two regions entailed a journey spanning multiple monsoon seasons, and therefore had a more supra-regional character. The Bay of Bengal should therefore be viewed as a distinct and separate space within the framework of the Indian Ocean monsoon.

### *Sailing to Arakan*<sup>61</sup>

Travel from the coast of Coromandel to Arakan was possible in two seasons. The first season ran from February to May, the second consisted of a relatively short period in September. Sailings were best undertaken in February. February provided a relatively calm sea and

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of *Kitab al-Fawa'id fi usul al-bahr wa l-qawa'id of Amad b. Majid al-Najdi* (London, 1971), pp. 364-367.

<sup>57</sup> A. Villiers, *Monsoon seas. The story of the Indian Ocean* (New York, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Tibbetts, *Arab navigation*, pp. 367-368.

<sup>59</sup> Tibbetts, *Arab navigation*, pp. 368-370.

<sup>60</sup> Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilization*, p. 133.

<sup>61</sup> P.v.d.B[urg], *Curieuse beschrijving*, pp.1:8-149, 154, 155-156.

people would sail along the coast just as if they would be sailing to Bengal. Arriving at 19 degrees north one would set course to the east and take advantage of the southern winds blowing along the Arakanese coast at that time. If one were to sail in March from Coromandel to Arakan, a course could be set direct for the coast of Arakan with the south-eastern winds prevailing on the Arakanese coast at that time. Local ships would preferably sail in April or May to take advantage of the current and more favourable winds.<sup>62</sup> Sailing in May could prove hazardous because of strengthening winds, but this time of year provided also the quickest passage.

In September only a brief slot was available for sailing to Arakan. The best days were from 8 to 10 September, setting a course for Cape Negrais, and when land was sighted following the coast to the Boronga islands. For rowing or local shipping this was the best time of the year to arrive in Arakan. The westerly monsoon winds had almost died out and the entrance of the Kaladan river was relatively easy to take with six to nine fathoms of water. It was not advisable to wait until late in September because then the north north-eastern winds would begin to blow causing ships to have to return to Coromandel half way and risk being wrecked on the Coromandel coast. The sailing season in September was thus comparatively short, running from 8 to 14 September latest.

The best time to sail from Batavia to Arakan was at the end of August, or early in September. Sailors would set a course to arrive at the Arakan coast near the Boronga islands at the mouth of the Kaladan river.

Sailings from the coast of Coromandel to Pegu should best be undertaken on 10 September or at least in within five days before or after that date. It was not advisable to sail in August.

### *Sailing from Arakan*<sup>63</sup>

The different winds also had their impact on departures from Arakan to other places in the Bay of Bengal. In December, with the north-eastern winds blowing, a direct course could be set for the Maldives or the coast of Coromandel. Local shipping would take advantage of the strong currents and winds early in January to make a quick voyage across the Bay of Bengal to the coast of India. Local ships wanting to cross to Bengal could sail in early January, keeping a north-westerly course. But with their ships not built to sail against the wind they preferred to sail at the end of January, or in early February with easterly winds blowing them to the Bengal coast or Coromandel. February was the best month to cross the Bay of Bengal in this direction. If one were to sail to Sri Lanka or Coromandel during this month a course

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<sup>62</sup> See also NA VOC 1062 Short note on Arakan by Samuel Kindt [Informatie in't corte toucherende voyage op Arracan] c. 1615., fol. 39-39v.

would be set just skirting the Andaman islands, and from there to Sri Lanka, Taganapatnam, Porto Novo or Masulipatnam. The Arakanese with their rowing vessels had to be careful not to end up north of these harbours because otherwise they would not be able to reach their destinations. Some Arakanese captains would wait until March for their departures for Coromandel and arrive in April, relying wholly on the currents at a time when there was almost no wind at all. This was a dangerous gamble because the monsoon set in around this time of year and an offshore wind started to blow on the Coromandel coast. Combined with a shift in the currents a departure in March was a great risk with the very real possibility of having to return after having reached the Andaman islands. If the journey in March was successful it took the ships about 38 to 40 days to arrive. A departure in February on the other hand meant the journey could be completed in 14 to 16 days.

From Pegu to Coromandel or Bengal would be practicable between 6 and 18 December, vessels would flow with the current, and being towed to sea. A voyage to Bengal would follow the Arakanese coast, because of the northerly wind. In January with a north-easterly or east-north-easterly wind the Arakan coast could be avoided if one wanted to sail from Cape Negrais to for example Pipli.

#### *The effect of the monsoon on trade in Arakan*

Pieter van der Burg in his 1677 book on Golconda and Pegu gave a good overview of the rhythm of travel in the Bay of Bengal in the seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> Van der Burg had an experience of over 20 years serving the VOC on the Coromandel coast. The work of Van der Burg reflects for a large part his knowledge of the indigenous trade routes and sailing seasons in the Bay of Bengal. It is safe to assume that the core of his description is based on local traditions. A major argument in favour of this hypothesis is the fact that VOC ships often sailed outside the seasons of travel as described by Van der Burg. The VOC, or indeed European ships in general, were built more strongly, could sail against the wind and were built to withstand stronger winds and seas as opposed to local ships. Thus when we compare the description of the sailing season by Van der Burg with the arrival and departure dates of VOC ships it is striking how often Dutch ships sail outside the preferred season. The seasons described by Van der Burg should therefore be seen as the traditionally preferred times of travel, tailored to the limitations of local ships. The fact that European ships were able to sail 'out of season' already had a serious impact on local shipping. In Arakan the VOC could wait

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<sup>63</sup> P.v.d.B[urg], *Curieuse beschrijving*, pp. 151-152, 155-156.

<sup>64</sup> P.v.d.B[urg], *Curieuse beschrijving van de gelegenheid, zeden, godsdienst en ommeegang, van verscheyden Oost-Indische gewesten en machtige Landschappen. En inzonderheid van Golconda en Pegu. Alsmede een pertinente aanwijzing, hoe men door heel Indien, alle plaatsen op zijn tijd moet bevaren*. (Rotterdam: Isaak Naeranus, 1677).



longer for their ships to take a full cargo and conversely arrive earlier or later than others with their merchandise, all of which could provide them with extra profit and a competitive edge.<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that it is mainly the trading routes relevant to the VOC which are discussed by Van der Burg's, and as such the absence of a description of for example the route between Mrauk U and Aceh should not be taken to mean that there was no commerce between these two places.

### *Conclusion*

The influence of the monsoon on trade has been seen to be considerable, the Arab word *mawsim*, literally 'a fixed period', being used to indicate the travelling seasons even gave its name to this natural phenomenon. We have also seen that although European ships could not avoid the monsoon altogether, they were able to sail outside the traditionally perceived seasons, thus gaining a competitive edge on local shipping. Moreover, European ships were quicker and safer for crossing the Bay of Bengal, which would also entice local merchants to freight European ships in the long run.

Arakan was closely tied into the commercial and cultural networks spanning the Bay of Bengal. The difficult routes through the Arakan Yoma made contact with the Irrawaddy plains relatively difficult and fostered Arakan's orientation towards the Bay of Bengal. The Bay of Bengal in this view should be seen as a historical entity that was united by the system of the monsoon. Within the Bay of Bengal Arakan and Bengal shared many geographic and climatologic conditions and formed an environmental continuum that also fostered cultural homogenization.

In this so-called Arakan-Bengal continuum the city of Chittagong was of strategic importance. Chittagong had the best sea harbour and also the best connections with south-eastern Bengal. Chittagong provided direct access to the economic centre of Bengal. Chittagong's role as Bengal's main entrepôt seems to date from at least the fifteenth century, if not earlier. The idea that this position had come about in the late sixteenth century as a result of a sudden eastward movement of the Bengal delta seems highly unlikely. Deltaic change probably was much more gradual than has been suggested by Eaton.

In Arakan itself Mrauk U was best placed to control the large agricultural planes of the Lemro and Kaladan rivers in the Arakan littoral. Mrauk U's rather closed off position from Burma by the Yoma's limited its significance as a regional entrepôt. It provided on the other hand security from invasions from Upper Burma. The location of Mrauk U straddling

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<sup>65</sup> An excellent overview of the effects of the monsoon on shipping in the Bay of Bengal was given by Laurens Pit in 1663 and quoted in W. Dijk, *Seventeenth century Burma*, pp. 75-81.

the hills between the Lemro and Kaladan rivers a few days sailing from the Bay of Bengal also provided secure defences against maritime invasions. At the same time this provided the Arakanese kings with a safe base from where they could operate in both Burma and Bengal.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGINS OF THE MRAUK U KINGDOM (1430 – 1593)

The sixteenth century saw the rise to power in south-eastern Bengal of the Arakanese kingdom. At the same time the Mughals entered Bengal from the northwest and came into contact with the Arakanese. The arrival of the Mughals and the Arakanese in Bengal would spark a conflict between both parties for control over the economic heart of Bengal situated around Dhaka and Sripur. The war over Bengal would last for approximately ninety years. Starting in the early fifteenth century this Chapter describes the origins of the Mrauk U kingdom and the beginnings of the Ninety Years' War.

#### *2.1 The early years of the Mrauk U kingdom*

From the third decade of the fifteenth century the Arakanese kings of Mrauk U extended their hold over the Arakanese littoral. The coastal areas and the major islands Ramree and Cheduba were slowly brought under their control.<sup>1</sup> During the sixteenth century successive Arakanese kings were able to gain control over the most important entrepôt of Bengal, Chittagong. The control over Chittagong was the key to Arakan's economic growth and its military successes during the last part of the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century. Mrauk U was, in other words, to grow into a regional power from the sixteenth century onwards. This Chapter seeks to identify the circumstances under which from the middle of the sixteenth century the Arakanese gained control over south-eastern Bengal in general and its main sea port Chittagong more in particular. The role of a large and diverse community of Portuguese soldiers and traders in this process will receive special attention. The Portuguese would become an important element in Bengali politics from the early sixteenth century onwards. The alliances the Arakanese were able to forge with the Portuguese would prove crucial in the exercise of Arakanese control over this part of Bengal and the further development of the Arakanese state.

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<sup>1</sup> Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion: Origins, context, means and practice' in Gommans and Leider, *The Maritime Frontier of Burma*, pp. 127-149; 127-131.

*The foundation of Mrauk U*

The early history of the formation of the Mrauk U kingdom is not well known. From what we know today it seems the early kings slowly gained authority over the Arakanese littoral by military means and diplomacy. Mrauk U was chosen as the site for the Arakanese capital in 1430.<sup>2</sup> According to Arakanese chronicle traditions the founding father of the Mrauk U dynasty, Man Co Mwan (c. 1404-1433), was exiled from Arakan by Burmese troops from the kingdom of Ava. He subsequently regained control of the kingdom after he invaded Arakan from Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The exact circumstances surrounding Man Co Mwan's invasion are vague, but all different chronicle traditions reserve an important role for assistance provided by the Bengal sultan Jalal ud-Din (1415/6-1432/3).<sup>4</sup> According to the Arakanese chronicles, Mrauk U would remain tributary to the Bengal sultans for several decades afterwards. The foundation myth of the Mrauk U state points to the close relations between Bengal and Arakan from at least the fifteenth century. The legendary stories surrounding the founding of Mrauk U are not confirmed by other sources; especially the involvement of the Bengal sultanate cannot be confirmed by for instance Bengali history.<sup>5</sup> The history of the Bengal sultanate during the time of sultan Jalal ud-Din provides no clues at all to his involvement in the creation of Man Co Mwan's new kingdom. The evidence for the existence of a tributary relationship between Arakan and Bengal afterwards is scant and largely based on a few sultanate coins attributed to the Arakan mint.<sup>6</sup> In the tales about the origin of the Mrauk U kingdom, control over Arakan is however closely associated with access to Bengal's (military) resources. The importance of the foundation myths lies therefore more in the way in which the Arakanese have perceived their relationship with Bengal. Earlier examples of this close connection between Arakan and south-eastern Bengal can be traced during the Vesali period (c.600 and 1000) when Arakan and south-eastern Bengal shared a common political culture.<sup>7</sup> There are strong indications that the Candra dynasties of Harikela

<sup>2</sup> For various legendary explanations of the name Mrauk U see San Baw U, 'My rambles among the ruins of the golden city of Myauk-u', *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 11.3 (1921), pp. 163-169, ch 1-3; 13.2 (1923), pp. 99-105, ch. 4-5; 16.1 (1926), pp. 36-42, ch. 6-7; 23.1 (1933), pp. 13-19, ch. 9; ch 4, pp. 99-103. Leider, 'Taxation', p. 74-75.

<sup>3</sup> Exiled in 1406 the Laungkarak king Naramittha returned to Arakan taking the name of Man Co Mwan. Leider 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', pp. 128-129 ; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 58-64.

<sup>4</sup> Although the foundation myths purport to describe the early fifteenth century, there are good reasons to assume that the various chronicle traditions actually refer to a much later period of c. the seventeenth century when the Mughals had become a potentially serious threat to Arakanese rule in south-eastern Bengal. Leider has pointed to the abundant use of anachronisms and the frequent erroneous references to Indian or Bengal rulers not contemporary to Man Co Mwan. Jalal ud-Din is also not named as such, but reference is made to the Bengal sultan. See Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 60-62 and Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names'. S.E. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate. Politics, Economy and Coins (AD 1205-1576)* (Delhi: Manohar, 2003) pp. 111-113.

<sup>5</sup> Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, pp. 156,162, 168, 195.

<sup>7</sup> Vesali was an early Arakanese city located in the Kaladan valley.

(Chittagong) and Arakan were linked and that the region of Harikela was culturally and politically dominated by the descendants of the Candra dynasty from Vesali.<sup>8</sup>

Man Co Mwan was succeeded in 1434 by his brother Ali Khan (1434-1458).<sup>9</sup> Ali Khan brought parts of the Arakanese littoral under control of Mrauk U and is also believed to have campaigned against Ramu, Cukkara, and Chittagong. Chittagong remained under the control of the Bengal sultans.<sup>10</sup> Ali Khan's successors, Baco Phru (1458-1481) and Do Lya (1481-1491) continued to extend Mrauk U's control to the east and west. Chittagong was probably attacked in 1459 and 1481 or both. Although it seems the Mrauk U kings established a temporary hold over the area between Chittagong and the Naf, it is unclear to which extent they were able to control the city.<sup>11</sup> The fifty years between 1480 and 1530 have been described by Leider as the least known period of the Mrauk U dynasty. It seems the hold of Mrauk U over the Arakanese littoral declined and the kingdom was apparently gripped by several succession struggles.<sup>12</sup> In 1513 the Arakanese king Man Raja was put to flight because of incursions by the Sak from Tripura. The Tripura governor of Chittagong was styled 'Vanquisher of Arakan' following the 1513 raid on Arakan.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars have even gone as far as to suggest that numismatic evidence dated to 1526/7 proves that during the reign of the Bengal sultan Nasir ud-Din Nusrat Shah (1519-1531) coins were minted in Arakan in the name of Nusrat Shah's son Ghiyath ud-Din Mahmud Shah, suggesting Arakan briefly lost its independence to the Bengal sultanate.<sup>14</sup> M. Robinson and S. Goron have however convincingly shown that the Rupees attributed to the 'Arakan mint' in fact belong to a category of coins minted at Satgaon. As there is no compelling evidence to suggest a Bengali occupation of Arakan, the notion of Bengali sultans minting coins in Arakan should be dismissed.<sup>15</sup>

The reign of the Arakanese king Man Pa (1531-1553) has always been regarded by Arakanese historiographers as one of the most glorious and important periods in the history of Mrauk U, and a sharp contrast with his immediate predecessors. Man Pa is famous for

<sup>8</sup> Coins struck in east Bengal were for example exact copies of Vesali coins. Kyaw Minn Htin, 'Historical Geography and Urbanization in Ancient Arakan, Myanmar. The archaeological landscape of the old capitals to AD 1400', 2nd Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asia Studies (Asia Research Institute / National University of Singapore, 26-27 July 2007), pp. 2-6. S.M. Ali, 'Chandra kings of Patikera and Arakan', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 6 (1961), pp. 267-274.

<sup>9</sup> The Arakanese name of this king is Man Kha ri, but he is best known by his Muslim name. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', p. 207.

<sup>10</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>11</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 70-74.

<sup>12</sup> See Bibliothèque nationale à Paris Mss. Anglais 26. *Extrait d'une chronique Arakanaise*. Kindly provided to the author by Jacques Leider.

<sup>13</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>14</sup> Hussain quoting also João de Barros. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, pp. 153, 156, 162, 168.

<sup>15</sup> M. Robinson and S. Goron, 'The so-called "Arakan" mint rupees of the Bengal sultans', D.W. Macdowell, S. Sharma and S. Garg eds., *Indian numismatics. History, art, and culture. Essays in honour of dr. L.P. Gupta* 2 vols. (Delhi: Agam Prasad, 1992), pp. 2:221-228; 2:225-228.

defending Arakan against Burmese and Portuguese invasions, for leading a successful campaign against south-eastern Bengal and conquering Chittagong. Apart from this he is also credited with the building of some of the most famous religious edifices, like the Shittaung temple where he had himself depicted as a god standing on Ganesa with his Arakanese and Bengali wives on his side, a symbol for his conquests in Bengal.<sup>16</sup> The palace walls and some parts of the city's defences were probably also first constructed by Man Pa.<sup>17</sup> The demographic, economic or military explanations for this expansion of Mrauk U's influence are not well known yet. The following paragraph will provide a closer look at the political situation in Chittagong during the sixteenth century.

## 2.2 Portuguese and Afghans in Bengal

In the early sixteenth century the political situation in Chittagong was very unstable. At this time there were several contenders for supremacy in south-eastern Bengal. Tripura rajahs, Bengal sultans and Mrauk U kings all attempted to control the port city. These three native powers sought the assistance of independently operating groups of warlords from Afghan and Portuguese descent. As a consequence the city and its environs often changed hands. In 1512 Rai Chaichag, the Tripura general, conquered the city from the Bengal sultan Ala ud-Din Husain Shah (1493-1519). Leider has suggested that the Arakanese king Gajapati (1513-1515) subsequently removed the Tripura governor of Chittagong and conquered the city. In the light of the prevailing instability in Arakan itself and the, be it meagre, evidence of Arakanese dependence on the Bengal sultanate, it seems more likely the Arakanese assisted the Bengal crown prince Nusrat Khan in his attack on Chittagong in 1515-1516. An Arabic inscription dated 1515-1516 (AH 921) discovered in Chittagong commemorates the construction of a mosque by a Majlis Khurshid as *wazir* and *sar-i-laskhar* of the *thana* Chittagong on orders of Husain Shah.<sup>18</sup> This inscription suggests that either the Arakanese campaign against Chittagong, as described by Leider, was not successful or the Arakanese fought on the side of the sultanate. The latter option seems the most convincing. The Arakanese king heading the expedition would have been either Man Co the elder (1515) or Sajata (1516-1521).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See frontispiece. Shittaung, or shrine of 80,000 images. M. Gatellier, 'Le temple Shitthaung à Myohaung, depositaire des traditions de l'Arakan', *Arts Asiatiques* 48 (1993), pp. 110-126.

<sup>17</sup> Leider 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, p. 153.

<sup>19</sup> *Rajamala*, p. 543 in 'Analysis of the Bengali Poem Raj Mala or Chronicles of Tripura' ed. and trans., *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 19 (1851), pp. 533-557; J.N. Sarkar ed., *The history of Bengal* vol. 2 (Dhaka: The University of Dhaka, 1948), pp. 142-159; G. Bouchon and L.F. Thomaz eds., *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy 1521* (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1988), pp. 15-70; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 76-79, 86-88.

In this turbulent period the first Portuguese arrived in Bengal and a large number of Afghans moved from northern India to Bengal. The Portuguese and Afghans would soon become major political and commercial powers in the area as warrior colonists.<sup>20</sup> The arrival of the Afghans was a direct result of the 1526 invasion of Delhi by Babur, the first Mughal emperor, when he dislodged the Afghans from Delhi. As a result, thousands of refugee Afghans moved into Bengal, where they established themselves as warlords. The dominant positions that these Afghans would claim in Bengal has lead Eaton to designate the period between 1537 and 1612 'the Afghan age' in Bengali history.<sup>21</sup> The Afghans would in the latter part of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century become the backbone of a coalition of *Bhara Bhuiyas* - or local lords – who tried to withstand the Mughal advance in Bengal.

The Portuguese arrived in 1516 on a trading mission, sailing from Pasai on Sumatra. Two years later in 1518 the first official Portuguese mission, headed by Dom João da Silveira, landed on the Arakanese coast somewhere near the Mayu estuary on their way to Chittagong. This first official Portuguese mission set the tone for the further involvement of the Portuguese in southeast Bengal and Arakan. When the mission arrived in Chittagong they brought with them into port a prize that belonged to a relative of the governor of the city and they were immediately suspected to be pirates. It did not take long for hostilities to break out between the Portuguese and the governor of the city. As a consequence the Portuguese had to spend the monsoon period outside Chittagong as they were no longer welcome in the city.<sup>22</sup>

The Arakanese apparently soon realized the potential benefits of an alliance with the Portuguese as they were quick to request their assistance in the struggle over Chittagong. According to a letter from one of the Portuguese captains, Dom João de Lima, the Arakanese asked for help in regaining Chittagong from the Bengal sultanate at Gaur. Similarly, in a letter to the king of Portugal, an Arakanese king, probably Sajata, mentioned the visit of Dom João da Silveira and promised the Portuguese every kind of assistance if they wanted to trade in this part of the Bay of Bengal.<sup>23</sup>

From 1518 onwards the Portuguese would play an important role in this region as merchant warriors. Already from their first appearance in the Bay of Bengal the Arakanese kings regarded the Portuguese as potential military allies. In this respect they were not alone; the Bengal sultans and other local lords also forged important alliances with the Portuguese communities in Bengal.<sup>24</sup> In south-eastern Bengal the Portuguese were only one of several groups of mercenary soldiers. In an Asian context these groups of mercenaries cum traders,

<sup>20</sup> Rita Joshi, *The Afghan nobility and the Mughals* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), pp. 18-19, 95-97, 72, 76.

<sup>21</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>22</sup> Bouchon, *Voyage*, pp. 362-363.

<sup>23</sup> Bouchon, *Voyage*, pp. 359-363. Leider is not sure of the name of this king. Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p.131.

<sup>24</sup> Bouchon, *Voyage*, passim. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, pp. 172-173.

were in effect comparable to groups like the Afghans, Mughals and other Turkish warrior colonists.<sup>25</sup> This meant that also in Bengal they operated in the same context as Turkish, Afghan and Abyssinian warlords. The Portuguese in fact formed micro-societies integrated into the local political and social life of the Arakan-Bengal continuum.<sup>26</sup> The gradual rise to power of the Arakanese in south-eastern Bengal seems to be closely connected to the development of an Arakanese-Portuguese alliance. I suggest that the rise of the Mrauk U kingdom to the status of a regional power should be understood taking into account the contribution of the Portuguese warriors. I will demonstrate that the Arakanese take-over of Chittagong at the end of the eighties of the sixteenth century cannot be explained without describing the Portuguese contribution. The power of the Portuguese reached its peak in the 1590s when a large portion of the Portuguese warriors serving the Arakanese kings became wealthy local lords, with their own landed estates.

The memoir of the 1521 Portuguese mission to the Bengal sultan Nasir ud-Din Nusrat Shah in Gaur, the so-called *Lembrança*<sup>27</sup>, suggests that only five years after their arrival in Bengal, the Portuguese had already become an important factor in Bengal politics. The *Lembrança* provides an important insight into the political situation in Chittagong during the early sixteenth century. It shows that the hold of the Gaur sultanate on Chittagong was weak, and that groups of mercenary warriors, both Portuguese and Turkish, played an important role in the struggle for control over Chittagong.<sup>28</sup> As the anonymous author of the *Lembrança* wrote on returning to Chittagong after his mission to Nusrat Shah:

I saw Rafael Perestrelo entrenched on the top of a hill, which was so well fortified, that it could have served as a base for the destruction of the whole of Bengal... I saw him in the company of the Rume [Turk] Ali Agha and his men, all armed with good arquebuses, lances and shields; and with them were all Rafael Perestrelo's Portuguese followers equipped as archers, most of them clothed in the style of the country...It was then that the [newly appointed] governor [of Chittagong] arrived in a village one

<sup>25</sup> Frederick C. Lane and Niels Steensgaard quoted in Geoffrey Parker, *The military revolution and the rise of the West*, p. 115. F.C. Lane, *Venice and History* (Baltimore, 1966), chp. 23 and 24; N. Steensgaard, 'Violence and the rise of capitalism': F.C. Lane's theory of protection and tribute', *Review* 5 (1981), pp. 247-273. See also G.B. Ness and W. Stahl, 'Western Imperialist armies in Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1977), pp. 2-29.

<sup>26</sup> J. Leider, 'The Portuguese communities along the Myanmar coast', *Myanmar Historical Research Journal* 10 (Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 2002), pp. 53-77; pp. 54-57.

<sup>27</sup> *Lembrança d'algumas cousas que se passaram quando António de Brito e Diogo Pereira foram a Bengala, assi em Bengala como em Tenaçarim e em Pegu onde também fomos* {A record of the events which took place when António de Brito and Diogo Pereira travelled with us to Bengal, Tenasserim, and Pegu} in G. Bouchon and L.F. Thomaz eds., *Voyage dans les Deltas du Gange et de l'Irraouaddy 1521* (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1988), pp. 207-350.

<sup>28</sup> Bouchon, *Voyage*, pp. 103-195.



league from the town. António de Brito ordered the factor and Gonçalo Tavares and me to go and greet him with some of the others. On the way we met Cristóvão Jusarte with Portuguese followers and Ali Agha [the Turkish warlord] with his companions all coming back. They were dressed in such a manner that it was impossible to distinguish the Portuguese from the Rumes [Turks]. They were all carrying arquebuses, bows and arrows and we almost thought that they were going to attack us. We then met with, and spoke to the governor and we came back to the town with him; we left him in his residence.<sup>29</sup>

The report illustrates the importance of the Portuguese and Turkish warlords in the area early on in the sixteenth century. They would emerge as a constant factor in the battle for dominance in Chittagong during the next two centuries. The *Lembrança* also shows the weak hold of the Gaur sultanate on Chittagong. It provides an illustration of the competition for supremacy between Portuguese and Turkish warlords. A story of the audience with Nusrat Shah further confirms this picture. The author of the *Lembrança* relates how Nusrat played two rival Portuguese ambassadors against each other and sent each ambassador with a different set of promises to Chittagong. In the *Lembrança* Chittagong comes forward as a classic example of a frontier town. The Gaur sultan controlled Chittagong by managing conflict on the basis of allocating overlapping rights to rival factions.<sup>30</sup>

Men like Cristóvão Jusarte and Rafael Perestrelo are described by contemporary Portuguese chroniclers by a wide variety of terms; such as *arrenegados* (renegades), *alevantados* (pirates), or *chatins* (mercenaries) to distinguish them from traders and soldiers operating from within the *Estado*, who were known as *casados*. The men that formed this community operated on the frontier of Portuguese-Asian society, and their goal was upward social mobility. By living in both worlds they could rise in status in two worlds, in their host society as well as in the Portuguese-Asian community. The careers of Filipe de Brito de Nicote, Manuel de Mattos and Domingos Carvalho are striking examples of successful *chatins* who used their career in the service of the Arakanese kings to enhance their status in Portuguese-Asian society.<sup>31</sup> First we will return to Arakan to discuss the reign of king Man Pa (1531-1553), perhaps the most famous of all Arakanese kings.

<sup>29</sup> *Lembrança*, pp. 337-338.

<sup>30</sup> J.J.L. Gommans, 'The embarrassment of political violence in Europe and South Asia c. 1100-1800' in J.E.M. Houben and K.R. van Kooij eds., *Violence Denied. Violence, non-violence and the rationalization of violence in South Asian cultural history* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 303-309; J.C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition. Essays in Indian Ritual, kingship, and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 108-127.

<sup>31</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Improvising empire: Portuguese trade and settlement in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1700* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. xvi-xix and M. A. Lima Cruz, 'Exiles and Renegades in early sixteenth century Portuguese India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 23,3 (1986), pp. 249-262.

### 2.3 *Man Pa*

The Arakanese king Man Pa (1531-1553) is regarded as the *pater patriae* by the Arakanese. Man Pa restored royal control over the Arakanese littoral and defended its sovereignty against attacks from Portuguese (1534) and Burmese (1546) invaders. The extensive building programme carried out by this king included the building of the palace and city walls and several of the most remarkable religious edifices in Mrauk U.<sup>32</sup>

The circumstances under which Man Pa ascended the throne are unclear.<sup>33</sup> The start of his reign marks the end of a relative dark age in Arakanese historiography, following the somewhat obscure years between 1480 and 1530 during which Arakan was invaded by Tripura and probably beset by civil war. Man Pa was a son of king Man Raja (1501-1513) and had been the governor of Sandoway in the southern part of the Arakanese littoral. It seems Man Pa became king after a violent clash with his predecessor, probably Sajata. The extensive building projects of Man Pa are proof of a prospering Arakanese economy at this time. Arakanese chronicles attribute to the reign of Man Pa a sharp increase in the number of foreign merchants visiting Arakan, a further sign of economic growth during these years.

Man Pa established Arakan's position as a regional power in a series of armed conflicts with the Bengal sultanate, the Burmese and Portuguese *chatins*. On 17 February 1534 a fleet of Portuguese *chatins* sailed up the Kaladan river with the objective of plundering Mrauk U.<sup>34</sup> The Portuguese penetrated Arakanese defences far up the river and were only just beaten off by the use of fire ships. In the narrow upper reaches of the Kaladan these fire ships were difficult to avoid and forced the Portuguese to retreat.<sup>35</sup> Leider has suggested that the reason the Portuguese had attacked Arakan must have been the growing wealth of the Mrauk U kings.<sup>36</sup> Their intimate knowledge of the Kaladan river system suggests moreover that they had visited Mrauk U on earlier occasions. The Portuguese attack and earlier other invasions probably hastened the development of Mrauk U into a fortified city.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The following description of the reign of Man Pa is largely based on Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 89-133.

<sup>33</sup> San Baw U, 'My rambles among the ruins of the golden city of Myauk-u', ch. 7, pp. 39-40.

<sup>34</sup> Possibly they were lead by Affonso de Mello who had earlier in 1533 led an expedition to Chittagong, where had landed with five ships and two hundred men. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, p. 169.

<sup>35</sup> San Baw U, 'My rambles among the ruins of the golden city of Myauk-u', Chapter 2, pp. 164-165.

<sup>36</sup> In 1607 a Portuguese text written to promote the incorporation of Lower Burma into the *Estado da Índia* recalled how the Arakanese king Man Pa was the first Asian ruler to refuse the Portuguese tribute: *o qual Mannio [Man Pa] fio primeiro rei que negou as pareas a el rei de Portugal*. Anon., *Questão acerca do direito do reino de Pegu e como pode pertencer a Sua Majestade* published in M.A. Marques Guedes, *Interferência e Integração dos Portugueses na Birmânia, ca. 1580-1630* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1994), pp 202-224, 218. See also Leider, 'The Portuguese communities along the Myanmar coast', p. 64.

<sup>37</sup> Leider has attempted a first description of the citadel and its outer defenses. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 95-101 Archaeological research will have to determine which parts of the fortifications were built at what time. Bob Hudson, *Ancient geography and recent archaeology: Dhanyawadi, Vesali, and Padaw* paper read at the conference The Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan: From Dhanyawadi to 1962, Chulalongkorn University Bangkok 2005. The stone fortifications of the city were augmented by wet moats and canals enabling the Arakanese to

The defences of Mrauk U were first put to the test in 1546 when the Burmese king Tabin-shwei-hti (Man tara rhwe thi 1531-1550) invaded Arakan. Arakanese chronicles reveal that from 1544 Burmese troops had repeatedly invaded the south of Arakan.<sup>38</sup> According to the Burmese chronicle of U Kala the invasion of Arakan could have been prompted by earlier Arakanese support for the king of Prome in his battle with the Burmese. The presence of a rebellious brother of Man Pa at the Pegu court is presented as another reason for Tabin-shwei-hti to invade Arakan. The existence of the rebellious relative of the Arakanese king is confirmed by Arakanese chronicles and an early seventeenth century Portuguese source. Leider has remarked that the Burmese invasion had a clear economic and political motivation. From a commercial point of view Arakan and Mrauk U were the last piece in a conscious effort by Tabin-shwei-hti to control the trade between Burma and the Bay of Bengal. Pegu, Martaban and Moulmein had earlier fallen into his hands. Mrauk U, with its trans-Arakan Yoma connections, could effectively short circuit Burmese efforts to control the trade of Upper Burma. Arakan thus was a major objective for any Burmese king wanting to maximize income from Bay of Bengal trade. On the political level the rebellious brother of Man Pa provided the Burmese king with an excellent excuse to install a puppet king in Arakan. Burmese and Arakanese chronicle traditions agree on the failure of the Burmese invasion of Arakan. Although Tabin-shwei-hti initially overran Arakanese defences in Sandoway and managed to secure a base near Mrauk U in the Lemro valley, his attack on Mrauk U failed. The Burmese in fact lost the initiative and after a short lived siege of the city they were in turn besieged by Arakanese troops who managed to cut off Burmese supply lines and forced Tabin-shwei-hti to the negotiating table. In the end Tabin-shwei-hti was forced to retreat to Lower Burma without having achieved his aim. Man Pa had successfully defended his capital Mrauk U.<sup>39</sup> According to Phayre the Burmese invasion initially opened fresh opportunities for the Tripura Raja to regain some ground in the Ramu area, which he subsequently had to leave to the Arakanese after the Burmese had been defeated at Mrauk U.<sup>40</sup>

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inundate large areas around the capital to defend the city. A recently discovered inscription indicates that officials were appointed for the upkeep of the sluices which were crucial for the functioning of the aquatic defenses. For a description of the fortifications as found by the British in the nineteenth century see Copy of a despatch from Brigadier-General T.W. Morrison, commanding south-eastern division to W.L. Watson, deputy Adjutant-General of the Army, dated Arakan camp 2 April 1825 in H.H. Wilson ed., *Documents illustrative of the Burmese war* (Calcutta, 1827), pp. 129-134, repeated in R.W. Pogson, *Narrative during a tour to Chateegaon, 1831* (Serampore, 1831), p. 166.

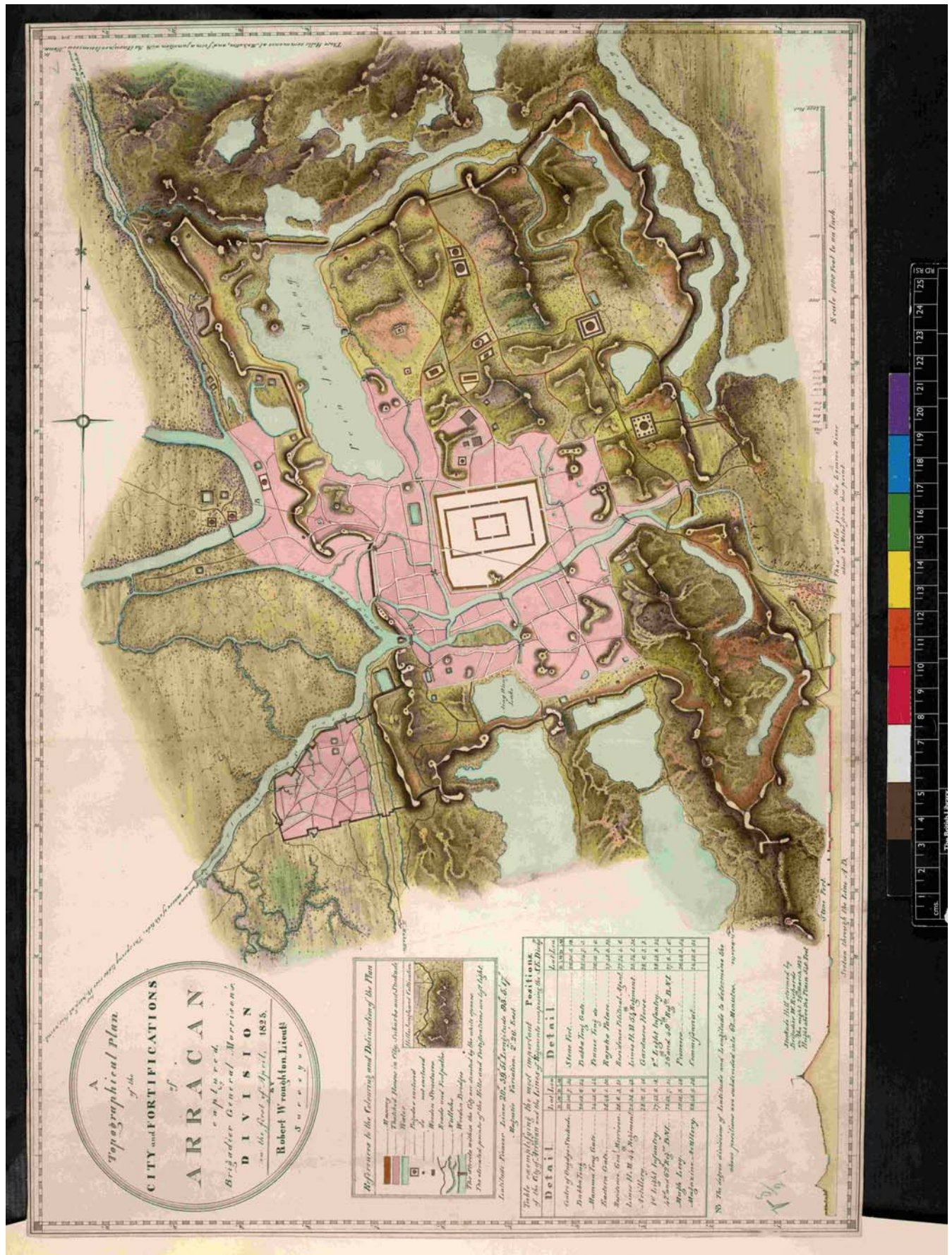
<sup>38</sup> San Baw U, 'My rambles among the ruins of the golden city of Myauk-u', Chapter 7, pp. 41-42.

<sup>39</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 102-119 provides an extensive comparison between Arakanese and Burmese chronicles regarding the Burmese invasion.

<sup>40</sup> Phayre, *History of Burma*, pp. 79-80.

Next page: Illustration: Map of Mrauk U. The 1825 map of Mrauk U by Robert Wroughton, provides the best representation of the city and fortifications of Arakan as they were to be seen in 1825 to date 'A topographical plan of the city and fortifications of Arracan by Robert Wroughton, 1825: 1:12,000'. BL Mss. Add. 57,699 (2).

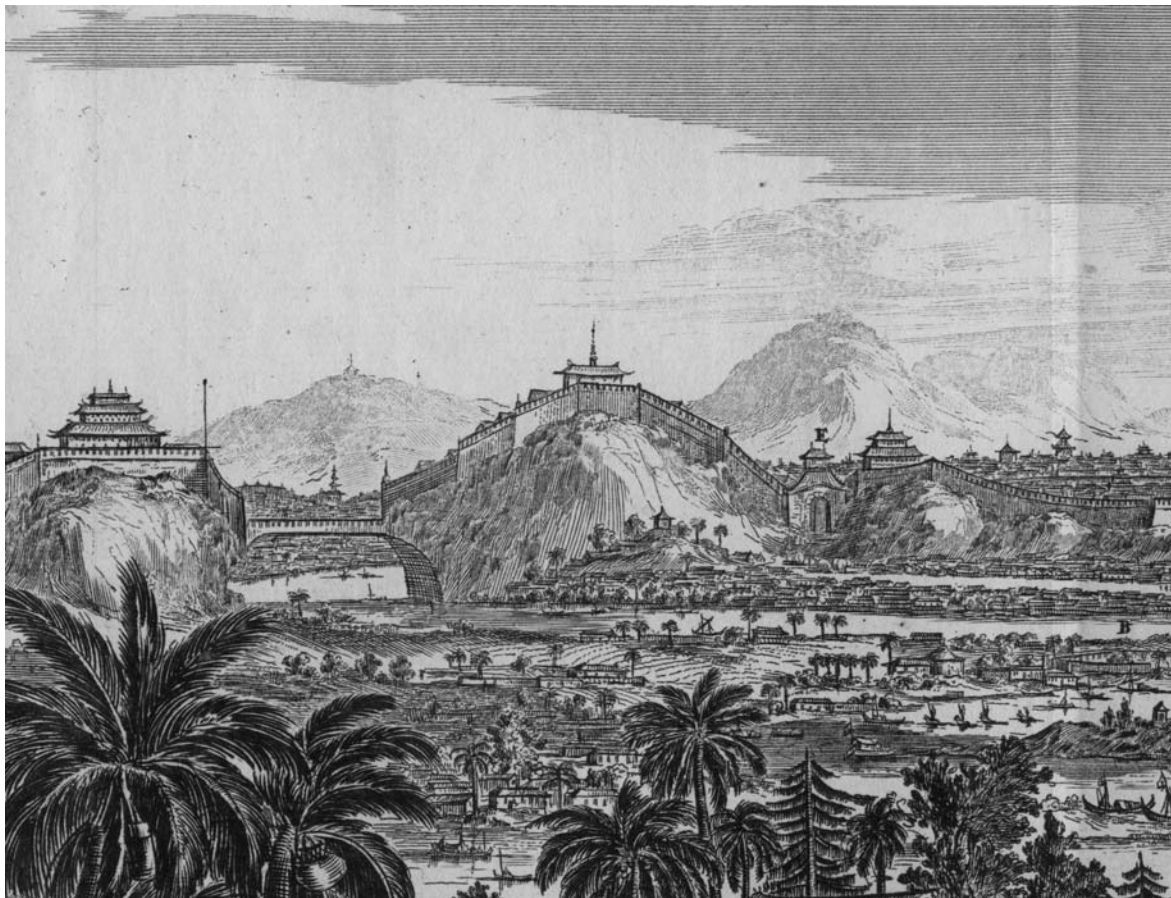








Letse-kan gate in 2000 AD and a Dutch artist's impression c.1663 of Mrauk U's walls from Wouter Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie...* (Amsterdam: Jacob Meurs en Johannes van Someren, 1676).



The most important events of Man Pa's reign had however occurred several years before the Burmese invasions. Probably in 1539-1540 Man Pa successfully conquered Chittagong. Although Arakanese chronicles do not agree to the exact date and circumstances of this conquest, a Buddhist votive inscription found in Chittagong and dated to 1542 proves that Arakan controlled Chittagong in 1542.<sup>41</sup> In the late 1530s the Afghan warlord Sher Shah (d. 1545) defeated the last independent sultan of Bengal Ghiyath ud-Din Mahmud Shah (1533-1538).<sup>42</sup> The Afghans, who had formed the ruling class of the Lodi sultanate, had earlier been driven from Upper India to Bihar by the invading Mughals.<sup>43</sup> Sher Shah managed to conquer most of Bengal but was unable to control south-eastern Bengal. In Chittagong a conflict erupted between two local governors, Amirza Khan and Khuda Bakhsh Khan, who had earlier been appointed by Ghiyath ud-Din Mahmud Shah. Man Pa probably used this conflict to intervene in Chittagong. Although there is little evidence, apart from the claims in the Arakanese chronicles, for the Arakanese occupation of Chittagong under Man Pa, the Buddhist inscription found in Chittagong confirms the Arakanese presence in Chittagong in 1542. Although the Arakanese chronicles are 'conflicting, confused and at times 'fancy', Leider has argued that a critical analysis of the Arakanese chronicles provides three incontestable facts. First, the Arakanese conquered Chittagong and its hinterland and probably also took possession of Sandwip, closing the door to maritime aid that might be sent to the city. Second, the Arakanese king obtained a princess from a Bengali lord, following a military success on the battlefield or as the result of a compromise. Leider rejects the idea that this princess, known as Pesida, was the daughter of the Mughal emperor, Sher Shah, or the Bengal sultan as is claimed by the Arakanese chroniclers. According to oral traditions the queen at the left of the statue of king Man Pa in the inner passages of the Shittaung temple, reproduced on the cover of this dissertation, represents this Bengali princess.<sup>44</sup> Third, the deportation of a large number of Bengalis to Arakan is seen by Leider as proof of Man Pa's conquest. At the same time Leider rejects the conquest of Bengal by Man Pa as far as Dhaka, the embassy of Man Pa's chief minister Mahapanakyo to Delhi and the royal pilgrimage to Bodhgaya. The stories in the chronicles describing the conquests of Man Pa in Bengal are according to Leider clearly anachronistic and probably eighteenth century reconstructions of Man Pa's reign.

The importance of these stories is therefore not their factual or fictional content, but the way in which these stories legitimize the conquest of Bengal by later Arakanese kings. In

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<sup>41</sup> J. Shore, 'The translation of an inscription in the Maga language engraved on a silver plate found in a cave near Islamabad', *Asiatick Researches* 2 (1790), pp. 383-387. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp 127-139 see also Leider 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p. 131.

<sup>42</sup> Basheer Ahmad Khan Matta, *Sher Shah Suri. A fresh perspective* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 95, 115-120.

<sup>43</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>44</sup> See the cover illustration of this dissertation.

fact they formulate an irredentist claim on Bengal. The chronicles all agree in claiming Arakanese sovereignty over Bengal long before Man Pa's first conquest. All chronicles used by Leider describe how the king, advised by his ministers, reclaims the 'twelve towns of Banga'. In this view those areas of Bengal had been ceded to the Bengal sultans by Man Pa's predecessor Man Co Mwan when he accepted Bengali aid in his attempts to recover the kingdom. In this way Man Pa not so much occupied south-eastern Bengal but restored Arakanese control to an area which had earlier belonged to the Arakanese.<sup>45</sup> This wish to legitimize war is engrained in the conception of kingship of the Buddhist *cakravartin* king.<sup>46</sup> In the end if one thing can be said of the reign of Man Pa, it is that he had proven Arakan could now claim to be a substantial power in the region.

The important position the Portuguese *chatin* community in Chittagong acquired during the sixteenth century is reflected in the appointment of Nuno Fernandes Freire as customs collector by Mahmud Shah (1533-1538) in 1537. He was given this position in recognition of Portuguese assistance to sultan Mahmud Shah during his struggle with Sher Shah (1539-1545).<sup>47</sup> The upheaval in Bengal during the middle of the sixteenth century left even more room for an autonomous position of the Portuguese community. The Afghan sultans of Bengal had to focus on the Mughal presence on their borders and left the way open for Man Pa to conquer Chittagong. The precise circumstances of Man Pa's conquest of Chittagong are vague and there is no firm evidence as to the extent and duration of the conquest. The Tripura chronicle *Rajamala* mentions the flight of the Afghan governor of Chittagong to Tripura.<sup>48</sup> It seems that the Arakanese hold on Chittagong was only temporary, and after some years control over Chittagong reverted to Afghan warlords or to the powerful king of Tripura Vijayamanikya (1536-1563).<sup>49</sup>

The 1534 Portuguese attack which was successfully repulsed by Man Pa no doubt still served to strengthen the Portuguese presence in the Bay of Bengal and perhaps brought home to the Arakanese the effectiveness of western firearms.<sup>50</sup> It is clear that all local powers in the Bay of Bengal were eager to use western firearms technology to their advantage. The Arakanese, the Burmese and the Bengal sultans all frequently employed Portuguese gunners and firearms in their armies. As Lieberman has observed, the Portuguese possessed

<sup>45</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 138.

<sup>46</sup> The royal rhetoric with regard to Burma's wars with Ayutthaya and the Ayutthayan wars with Cambodia are other examples in this respect. See, Chutintaranond, *On both side of the Tenasserim range. History of Siamese-Burmese relations* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 1995) p. 62 cited in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, 138. See also Anaukpetlun's demand in 1614 that the Arakanese should handover the celebrated white elephant captured after the 1599 siege of Pegu. NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter of Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.

<sup>47</sup> J.J.A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal* (Calcutta: Butterworth & Co., 1919), pp. 38-39.

<sup>48</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 164, 166, 173; *Rajamala*.

<sup>49</sup> Leider 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 137-138 and Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion'.



arquebuses and small cannon superior to local weapons hitherto available. European cast-metal muzzle loaders were less likely to burst, their trajectories were longer and more accurate, and their shots were heavier than those of Asian cannon of the same weight.<sup>51</sup>

The political situation in Chittagong after the death of Sher Shah in 1545 allowed the Portuguese to gain even more influence as the last bits of central power in Bengal vanished. In 1569 the Portuguese felt apparently strong enough to murder the Afghan governor of the city.<sup>52</sup> Until the consolidation of Arakanese power in 1590 the Chittagong area remained a contested frontier between Bengal, Tripura and Arakan.

After the death of Man Pa the Arakanese throne was taken by his son Man Tikkha (1553-1555). It seems that during the reign of this king Arakan again lost its control over Chittagong. The fact that the Koethaung, a large temple in Mrauk U constructed by Man Tikkha, appears not to have been finished is illustrative of the loss of control over Chittagong.<sup>53</sup> With the loss of control over Chittagong the ambitious building programme began by Man Pa suddenly came to a halt during the reign of his son Man Tikkha. It is very well possible that the loss of their Bengal resources necessitated the Arakanese kings to stop the construction of the larger temples because they could no longer count on the expertise of the Bengali craftsmen and lacked a substantial part of their income.

Man Tikkha was followed by king Man Co Lha (1556-1564). During the reign of this king the Muslim governor of Chittagong appealed to the Arakanese for help against an invasion of the Tripura king. A decade later the Arakanese king Cakrawate (1564-1571) assisted the Tripura king in a confrontation in south-eastern Bengal with Afghans and rebellious Tripura soldiers. A Muslim inscription of 1568 and the report of the Italian Cesare Fredrici prove that by that time Chittagong was certainly again under the control of the Bengal sultans.<sup>54</sup> On the basis of numismatic evidence it has even been suggested that Arakan itself had somewhat earlier, c. 1555-1558, lost its independence to the Bengal sultans. Robinson has however shown that this idea was based on an incorrect reading of coins minted at Satgaon, which were earlier attributed to the 'Arakan mint'.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> V. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles - Anarchy and Conquest c.1580-1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 27-29.

<sup>52</sup> Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 269.

<sup>53</sup> The Koethaung, or 'shrine of the 90,000 images', is with the Shittaung and the Dukhanthein one of the three largest temples in Mrauk U. It was excavated in 1997. From the excavations it appears that the temple was never finished. P. Gutman, *Burma's lost kingdoms*, pp. 106-112.

<sup>54</sup> Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p. 132.

<sup>55</sup> In the same article Robinson dismissed a similar argument made with regards to a coin of Ghiyath ud-Din Mahmud Shah (1526-7) vide infra. Robinson, 'The so-called "Arakan" mint rupees of the Bengal sultans', pp. 221-228. See also A.B.M. Habibullah, 'Arakan in the pre-Mughal history of Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 11 (1945), pp. 33-38, 34.

### 2.4 *Man Phalaung*

The Arakanese king Man Phalaung (1571-1593) finally brought Chittagong firmly under Arakanese control. Man Phalaung also repelled a Burmese invasion, and put an end to invasions of the Sak, an ethnic group of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The subjugation of these hill tribes and the recognition of Arakan as a superior power by the Tripura king paved the way for Arakanese control over Chittagong. The Mughal victories in Bengal over the Afghan sultans probably also contributed to Man Phalaung's success.

The strong relationship between Arakanese rule in Chittagong and the local Portuguese elite appears in the name of this Arakanese king. The nickname Man Phalaung means 'Portuguese king'.<sup>56</sup> In the great temple built by Man Phalaung in Mrauk U, the Dukhanthein, the figure of a Portuguese man stands amongst the statues of local lords.<sup>57</sup> This illustrates the position the Portuguese had acquired as allies and local strongmen in the Arakanese littoral at the time of Man Phalaung. The temples build by Man Pa and Man Phalaung are in themselves a lasting testimony to their conquests in Bengal. The revenues resulting from these victories, both financially and demographically, must have contributed in no small means to their ability to build edifices like the Shittaung and Dukhanthein.

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<sup>56</sup> The name Man Phalaung is in local traditions in several different ways connected with the Portuguese. One explanation that is usually given is that Man Phalaung was born after Man Pa's victory over the Portuguese in 1534, while other stories connect this king's name with the growing importance of the Portuguese in the Arakanese army Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 513. The king's Pali name was Sirisuriyacanda mahadhammaraja. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', p. 210.

<sup>57</sup> It is not impossible that this man represents for instance Filipe de Brito, Manuel de Mattos or another contemporary leader of the Portuguese community in Arakan.



Dukhanthein temple, late sixteenth century - with a Portuguese man and an Arakanese lady paying obeisance to the Buddha from the central inner chamber.

In 1581 Man Phalaung crowned his second son Man Co Lha<sup>58</sup> as *anauk-bhuran*, or ‘lord of the west’ referring to his position as governor of south-eastern Bengal.<sup>59</sup> The rule of the Mrauk U kingdom in Chittagong was however far from secure during the last half of the sixteenth century. In 1586 for instance Man Co Lha had to face armed opposition from a coalition that consisted of local Chittagonian Muslims and local Portuguese who had sought the help of the Tripura king Amaranabikya. Ralph Fitch, an English merchant, who visited Chittagong in 1586 described the turbulent situation in the area called Porto Grande (Chittagong):

From Satagan [Satgaon] I travelled by the country of the king of Tippara [Tripura] or Porto Grande with whom the Mogores [Mughal] or Mogen [Arakanese] have almost continuall warres.<sup>60</sup>

Prince Man Co Lha defeated the Tripura army and he and his father Man Phalaung sent a punitive expedition to Udaipur, capital of the Tripura kingdom.<sup>61</sup>

The diaries of the Austrian nobleman Georg Christoph Fernberger illustrate the circumstances under which the Arakanese came to power in Chittagong. Fernberger was an adventurer who travelled to Chittagong in 1589 in what must have been a ‘Grand Tour’ in the true sense of the phrase. Fernberger has left us a telling account of the political situation in Chittagong at that time.<sup>62</sup> On 24 October 1589 Fernberger arrived at the port of Chittagong. He noted in his diary that he witnessed a conflict between the Arakanese prince Man Co Lha and the governor of Chittagong, whose name has escaped history. Before Fernberger’s eyes a story unfolded that had long been characteristic of the political landscape in Chittagong. At the day of his arrival Fernberger noted in his diary<sup>63</sup>:

The governor of Chittagong had rebelled against his lord the king of Bengal, Nandia Sundar, son of the king of Arakan.<sup>64</sup> The governor had taken a fort in which he had positioned 800 large and small guns. He hastened to defend the fort with 5,000 men and fifty elephants against the siege laid by the king. He also tried to win over to his

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<sup>58</sup> Not to be confused with the Arakanese king Man Co Lha (1556-1564).

<sup>59</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d’Arakan*, p. 197.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in H. Hosten, ‘Jesuit letters from Bengal, Arakan, and Burma (1599-1600)’, *Bengal Past and Present* 30 (1925), p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Leider ‘On Arakanese territorial expansion’, p. 134; Leider, *Le royaume d’Arakan*, pp. 158-165.

<sup>62</sup> G.C. Fernberger, *Georg Christoph Fernberger. Reisetagebuch (1588-1593) Sinai, Babylon, Indien, Heiliges Land, Osteuropa. Lateinisch-Deutsch* ed. and trans. R. Burger and R. Wallisch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999).

<sup>63</sup> Fernberger, *Reisetagebuch*, pp. 112-115, my own translation.

<sup>64</sup> Apparently a Bengali name for Prince Man Co Lha, the *anauk-bhuran*.

side the captain of the Portuguese fleet, António de Sousa [Godinho].<sup>65</sup> He promised to give the fort to the Portuguese if he emerged victorious. That is why the Portuguese captain offered him his assistance. Daily the governor and the Portuguese made sorties from the fort and fought small battles [with the king]. On the day that we arrived in the harbour of Chittagong 300 Indians and several Portuguese fell on the battlefield. The king had by that time already arrived in Chittagong and was present with his and his father's troops (40,000 men, of whom 10,000 were arquebusiers<sup>66</sup>, 370 armed elephants, and 4,000 large and small canons). He had encircled the fort of the rebellious governor on land and on the river, where he had more than 4,000 small boats. In order to make victory easier the king tried to convince the Portuguese to change sides. He sent his brother to the Portuguese captain as an emissary, with 200 men and fifty elephants with white flags and some presents, to win him over to the Arakanese side. The Portuguese agreed to the proposals of the king under the following conditions: The king would withdraw from the island of Sandwip, the revenue of which is enough to sustain the whole army, he would give them half the guns and 20,000 Lari, and both sides would release their prisoners. The rebellious governor then made a new offer to the Portuguese. He promised them even more than before and tried to keep the captain to the agreement concluded between them earlier. He now not only promised the fort, but also to put himself and his family into the hands of the Portuguese and he even agreed to be baptised. But as the Portuguese had already concluded a peace with the king their ships had sailed to the king's fleet and they now fought with those they had earlier fought against. The rebellious governor could not withstand the siege for more than three days now that the Portuguese had left him and he gave himself up to the king. The king took from the fort most of the bigger war material, elephants and money, but he let the governor live. The king even left this man in charge of the fort. People say that this was smart to leave the governor in command of the fort now that he owed his life to the king. The governor would now know that he could not trust the Portuguese and would probably not try the same thing again.

Fernberger in fact witnessed the last phase in the Arakanese struggle for dominance over Chittagong and noticed the important role the Portuguese played in the area. All earlier sources only indicate the way in which the Portuguese were involved in the struggle over the

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<sup>65</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam provides more details about the life of De Sousa in 'The Tail Wags the Dog or Some Aspects of the External Relations of the Estado da India, 1570-1600', *Moyen Orient & Ocean Indien* 5 (1988), pp. 131-160; pp. 149-150.

<sup>66</sup> Fernberger has *sclopetarii* which for the sixteenth century would translate as arquebusiers, see Bert S. Hall, *weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 181.

Karnafuli estuary, Fernberger's description gives a lucid picture of exactly how the conflict could unfold. Although the Arakanese king Man Phalaung had already in 1581 crowned his second son Prince Man Co Lha *anauk-bhuran*, the diary of Fernberger shows his rule in Chittagong was an uncertainty before 1589.<sup>67</sup> Although Leider has suggested that 1578 is a plausible date from where on the Arakanese gradually established their control over Chittagong, it is only after the 1589 conflict had been resolved in favour of the Mrauk U state that we can say that the Arakanese controlled Chittagong.<sup>68</sup> The year 1590 therefore seems an appropriate starting point for the dating of Arakanese rule in Chittagong. This date is supported by the fact that the first coin issued by Man Co Lha as governor of Chittagong is also of 1590 (BE 953).<sup>69</sup>

### *The organization of the kingdom*

There is little well dated material to describe the organization of the Mrauk U kingdom. We have to rely on a few lists of functionaries at the Arakanese court of uncertain date and provenance, and difficult to interpret Dutch renderings of Arakanese names and titles. Leider has discussed and compared references to the administration of the kingdom in his dissertation.<sup>70</sup> This discussion forms the basis for the analyses of a Dutch list of functionaries at the Arakanese court dating from the 1680s presented here. The list was made on the basis of information provided by Dirk Vonck, the last Dutch factory chief in Arakan.<sup>71</sup> Although the information thus dates from the end of the seventeenth century it is inserted here to extend our understanding of the functioning of the administration of the Arakanese kingdom. Apart from the observations made by Vonck this description of Mrauk U government will be augmented by information on the Mrauk U court from the VOC archives. The VOC documentation on the other hand does cover almost the whole seventeenth century.

The Arakanese nobility in the service of the king are referred to in Arakanese chronicles as *amhu amat*.<sup>72</sup> The honorific *to* added to *amat* is sometimes found in Dutch sources as *Ammato*, i.e. *amat-to*. Dutch sources also refer to the Arakanese nobility as *Sit-*

<sup>67</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 197.

<sup>68</sup> Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', p. 133.

<sup>69</sup> On this coin, dated BE 953, Satui Co Man styles himself as 'the son of the great king of the law' see V. Chowdhury, 'The Arakani Governors of Chittagong and their Coins', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* 42 (1997), p. 149, see also M. Robinson, 'The coinage of Chittagong under Arakanese rule (1575-1666)', B. Kluge and B. Weisser eds., *XII. Internationaler Numismatischer Kongress. Akten II* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 1338-1341.

<sup>70</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 370-384. See also Leider, 'Taxation', p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> After leaving Arakan, Dirk Vonck presented Daniel Havart with an interesting overview of the composition of the government of Arakan during the last years of Candasudhammaraja's reign. D. Havart, *Op- en ondergang van Cormandel. In zijn binnenste geheel open, en ten toon gesteld* 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1693), pp. 2:62-63.

<sup>72</sup> From *mhu*, 'govern' or 'administer' and *amat* 'minister'.



kes.<sup>73</sup> In this manner the population of Arakan was divided in three groups: the royal family, the ministers and the general population. In describing the functioning of the administration of Arakan it is not always possible to distinguish between members of the royal family and ministers as often only ministerial titles are provided in the sources. Local lords were often identified with the name of their fief with the designation *ca* added to the name of their apanage, e.g. *Laungkrak ca*.<sup>74</sup> Ministers and local lords as a group were hierarchically distinct from village leaders generally identified as *rwa su kri* or *rwa ca*.<sup>75</sup> Equally they would be named after their village or group of villages such as the *Louwedansougrij* from the Dutch sources, which title probably refers to the *Louwe taung su kri*, or chief of the village of Louwe.<sup>76</sup>

In general the king's ministers are divided in two groups, the ones on the left and the ones on the right. This division is a main characteristic of the lists of ministers that have survived. In Dutch sources this division translates at times in designations as 'the white *Sit-ke* and the black *Sit-ke*', but also the Arakanese terminology is used referring to the left hand man or *leiwei-mran* and the right hand man or *leirei-mran*. It is thought that some functions at the Arakanese court were divided this way to balance power between court factions. Havart for instance writes that there are 'two judges who on a day to day basis take turns in guarding the palace, they have jurisdiction over judicial cases in the whole country and have four captains under them.' Havart said that the Arakanese government, perhaps best described as the king's Privy Council, consisted of the following men:

1. A 'state-governor'<sup>77</sup> [the king's first minister], who takes care of all the affairs of state when the king is not at the court.
2. A Bailiff and a Commander of the Guards<sup>78</sup>, both of whom are under the command of the prime-minister.
3. An admiral, who has the command over the sailors on the fleet and the soldiers on the ground. The admiral furthermore has four important adjutants.
4. A governor over the Elephants, this person is the fourth most important man in Arakan.
5. A Chancellor.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Dutch: *Sikken, Sicque*. Transcribed by Leider as *cac-ke*. Normally known in Arakanese and Burmese history as military officers but in the contemporary Dutch sources as well as in Manrique they are not associated exclusively or specifically with the military but with the nobility in general. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 379.

<sup>74</sup> Longrasa in Dutch sources.

<sup>75</sup> From *rwa*, 'village' and *su kri* 'headman'. In Dutch sources commonly as *Rosa* or *Roos*.

<sup>76</sup> Taung or 'river' Louwe is a village not far downstream of Mrauk U in the Kaladan valley.

<sup>77</sup> *Rijks-bestierder* in Dutch.

<sup>78</sup> A *Bailjuw* and a *Opperste wagtmeester* in Dutch.

<sup>79</sup> *Rijks Cancelier* in Dutch.

6. Two judges, who on a day to day basis take turns in guarding the palace, they have jurisdiction over judicial cases in the whole country and have four captains under them.
7. A secret councillor of the king, who is also the chief spy. He has many other ordinary spies below him and they have to bring a daily report to the king on everything they have heard and seen in the country.
8. A chief monk who has thousands of monks under him, all dressed in yellow robes, with a yellow cap on their head.
9. A sheriff.<sup>80</sup>
10. A chief of the import and export duties<sup>81</sup>, who has two secretaries and a large number of 'soldiers'<sup>82</sup> to help him.
11. The court is furthermore served by a number of eunuchs, of whom two are important. One eunuch is the king's chamberlain and treasurer and the other is charged with the supervision of the farmers in the neighbouring villages, he is also the master builder [architect] of the king and supervisor of all the [construction] works in the country.<sup>83</sup>

Under the first heading we can recognize the *pran cui kri*, or prime minister as Leider calls him. Little is known from the chronicles about the functions of this man and other than his appearance in the list of Havart he is scarcely referred to by in Dutch or other non-Arakanese sources. His position as substitute of the king is confirmed by the Bengali poet Daulat Qazi who wrote that his patron Ashraf Khan was made *lashkar-wazir*<sup>84</sup> or 'chief minister and commander of the army'. He describes how when king Sirisudhammaraja (1622-1638) went on a hunting expedition 'Ashraf Khan went to his court' and sat with the ministers.<sup>85</sup> The Commander of the Guards can be identified as the *ko-ran-kri*.<sup>86</sup> This functionary is referred to most in Arakanese and non-Arakanese sources. The *ko-ran-kri* was not only in charge of the palace guards, *ko-rans*, but also of the army as a whole. He is seen leading most military operations when the king does not take charge himself. The bailiff is more difficult to identify but in all probability could be associated with the figure of the *cachma* or *sangma* of the Dutch sources. No Arakanese equivalent of this Dutch rendering of what must have been an Arakanese title has been found as yet. The figure of the *cachma* appears right from the arrival of the VOC in Dutch sources and throughout the whole seventeenth century this official remains one of the most important functionaries in the kingdom. The admiral or commander

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<sup>80</sup> *Schout* in Dutch.

<sup>81</sup> *Licentmeester* in Dutch.

<sup>82</sup> *Rakkers* in Dutch.

<sup>83</sup> *Fabriek, en opperhoofd van alle des koninks en 's Lands werken* is the Dutch expression used here.

<sup>84</sup> Obviously referring to the *sar-i lashkar wa wazir* a title also used by the Bengal sultans. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, p. 153.

<sup>85</sup> Ghosal, 'Missing links', p. 258.

<sup>86</sup> In Dutch sources the *korangerij*.



of the army could well be associated with the *dha puin kri*, literally the sword bearer, or commander of the army. In Dutch sources *dabein*. His adjutants or captains could be the *sonodo*, the *sattannangh*, and the *rijsondaer*. These are all Dutch renderings of as yet untraced Arakanese titles. *Rijsondaer* could possibly refer to the Arakanese title *juntat* a military commander mentioned by Leider in his description of the king's council. The governor of the elephants, the *chan ke kri*<sup>87</sup> was in all probability in charge of royal hunting expeditions in search of elephants, he might as well have been a military commander or a councilor. The chancellor in Dutch sources indicated as *rusappe* or chief writer of the king. The two judges or *taya thugyi*, the secret councilor or *nakhon*, the chief monk or *sangha raja*, the sheriff and the chief of the import and export duties or *katto* complete the king's council. The control over the harbor, or *bandel*, was in the hands of the *kotwal*. The eunuchs mentioned by Havart were important in that they managed the affairs of the palace, controlled access to the king and were in charge of royal domains. It has to be remembered that at the time Havart wrote the function of the *anauk-bhuran* was no longer relevant as the Arakanese had by then lost control over Chittagong.

The nobility in the service of the king would meet almost daily in the palace to discuss matters of state. It is striking that the chief of the Dutch factory was also allowed to be part of these gatherings and attended these meetings also on a very regular basis.<sup>88</sup> Daulat Qazi described the cosmopolitan character of these meetings:

The chief minister [Ashraf Khan] returned to court. When Sri [sic] Ashraf Khan sat in court, the pick of the Mughals, and the Pathans, numerous Hindus, both native and foreign, countless Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras also sat in rows.<sup>89</sup>

It is however clear that only the members of the king's Privy Council, as it was described above, were allowed to enter the private audience chamber of the king and then only when called in by the eunuchs. The rest, including the Dutch chief had to wait in the outer-courtyard or *pas* as the Dutch called it, until the king gave a public audience if they wished to speak to him personally.

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<sup>87</sup> In Dutch *Sanegrij*.

<sup>88</sup> See for a good example: NA VOC 1149, fols. 524-567v. Diary of Arent van der Helm 1644 [Extract uijt Dachregister gehouden door den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm vant gepasseerde int Coninkrijck Arracan 't sedert 19en februari pasado tot 30en october 1644].

<sup>89</sup> Ghosal, 'Missing links', p. 258.

### 2.5 Mughal expansion in Bengal

During the decades following the first appearance of Akbar's armies in Bengal in 1574, Mughal rule was far from secure. Mughal authority was threatened by a wide variety of local lords, collectively known as the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, or 'the twelve kings', although we should not take the number literally.<sup>90</sup> The number twelve is however significant here. Twelve is an auspicious number in India and the occurrence of similar lists of twelve governors in for example nearby Assam and indeed in Arakan itself cannot be considered a mere coincidence. In this particular instance the number may as well refer to the twelve governors that the former sultans of Gaur appointed at their coronation, as reflect a territorial mandala.<sup>91</sup> In Arakan a similar arrangement has been described by Sebastião Manrique for the coronation of king Sirisudhammaraja in 1635 (1622-1638), who had also twelve lesser kings crowned before he himself ascended the throne.<sup>92</sup>

Apart from opposition by the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, internal struggles in the Mughal camp also weakened imperial authority. It is important to note that Afghan and Portuguese warrior colonists would be closely connected to, or formed part of the *Bhara Bhuiyan* coalition. Sometimes these men were local lords themselves, and sometimes they acted as mercenaries in the service of a local chieftain. The Arakanese kings would over the years support these *Bhara Bhuiyas* in their struggle against the expansion of Mughal power in Bengal, but the alliance would be an ever changing one with local lords shifting their allegiance from the Arakanese side to the Mughal and back again. The Arakanese on the other side also joined the struggle for dominance in Bengal. The *Bhara Bhuiyas* thus were not a homogenous group. The different local lords freely and frequently shifted their allegiance to take advantage of the unsettled affairs in Bengal.

The years following Akbar's invasion of Bengal were characterized by instability. The emperor's policy of posting disaffected officers in Bengal made the province an ideal breeding ground for subversive activities. In 1579 a rebellion broke out which was led by two Mughal officials. Imperial authority was restored in some parts of Bengal after 1583 when Akbar sent a large military force to quell the rebellion.

The internal struggles in the Mughal camp prompted local lords to challenge imperial authority and to form local alliances against the Mughal emperor.<sup>93</sup> One of the leaders of the

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<sup>90</sup>The *Bhara Bhuiyas*, alternatively written by Portuguese authors as *Bojões*, or in English as 'Boyons'. Hosten relates Bhuiyas here to *Bhati* 'a low lying country' as explained by 'Abul-fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, which would give the meaning the 'Twelve lords of Bengal' Hosten, 'The Twelve Bhuiyas of Bengal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 9 (1913), pp. 437-449. Arakanese chronicles also refer frequently to the 'twelve cities of Bengal'. See Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', *passim*.

<sup>91</sup> This way the mandala is used as a model for describing patterns of diffuse political power. O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>92</sup>Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp 1:351-393; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p.207 n.206.

<sup>93</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 144-146.

Bengali opposition against Mughal rule was the Muslim leader and Afghan Isa Khan. This chieftain controlled a large part of the eastern delta from his stronghold Katrabo. Isa Khan in time became the leader of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*.<sup>94</sup> The Bengali's superiority in riverine warfare secured the *Bhara Bhuiya* coalition their first crushing naval victory over Mughal forces in 1584 against the forces of the subahdar Shahbaz Khan.

In 1583 Shahbaz Khan, already a veteran in the Bengal theatre was appointed as subahdar. Shahbaz Khan started his campaigns as subahdar by marching to Bardwan where he defeated the Afghan commander Bahadur Kuruh, who fled to Orissa. He then sent a detachment of troops to Ghoraghat to protect the north from attacks from Kuch Bihar or Mymensingh. At the same time troops were sent to Bardwan and further south to Hugli (Satgaon) to guard the frontier with Orissa.<sup>95</sup> In 1584 Shahbaz Khan continued his campaign with an attack on Isa Khan's dominions in Vikrampur. The subahdar moved his troops via Khizrpur to Sonargaon and he plundered Isa Khan's main stronghold, Katrabo while the latter was campaigning elsewhere. Shahbaz Khan then constructed a fort on the west bank of the Brahmaputra, at Tok where the river is joined by the river Lakhia and the river Banar. After a stand off which lasted seven months, the Afghan soldiers in the service of Isa Khan cut the embankments of the Brahmaputra, resulting in the flooding of the Mughal fort and batteries. After a hasty retreat to Bhawal, half way on the road to Dhaka, the Khan regrouped and did battle with Isa Khan on 30 September 1584. The battle was a resounding success for Isa Khan. Shahbaz Khan had to beat a hasty retreat to Tanda, leaving behind most of his possessions and his men as slaves to the conquering Bengalis.

The Mughals soon discovered that their standard tactics did not work as well in eastern Bengal as elsewhere. The favourite instrument of war of the Mughal nobility, the cavalry, could not be deployed to advantage here. The multitude of rivers, streams and creeks prevented an effectual use of their cavalry and infantry. As Gommans has argued, the natural location at which the mounted archers had to halt was Bihar at the head of the Bengal delta. This area can be described as the last natural campsite for the mounted armies of the Mughals.<sup>96</sup>

The lands east of the formidable Brahmaputra-Meghna river system remained for a long time a safe haven for all those opposing Mughal rule in Bengal, or as the Mughals would call it a *bulghakkhana* – a 'house of strife'.<sup>97</sup> The river formed a barrier behind which they could always retreat in time of need, safe from further attacks by the Mughal cavalry. The logistics of warfare in Bengal proved to be a difficult art to master for Mughal forces in the following years.

<sup>94</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>95</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 201-203.

<sup>96</sup> Gommans, *Mughal warfare*, p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> Gommans, *Mughal warfare*, pp. 27-28.

The 1579 rebellion in the Mughal camp had dealt a severe blow to ideas the emperor might have entertained about expanding the empire further into the heart of Bengal. The following years from a Mughal point of view would be spent securing the borders with Orissa, Bihar, Kuch Bihar, and Mymensingh. The campaigning season of 1585 again proved how precarious the Mughal hold on Bengal still was. At the end of March 1585 Mughal forces captured two forts at Tribeni near Hugli at the junction of the Ganges, Jamuna and the Saraswati, but at the same time Mughal headquarters at Tanda were threatened by Tahir Ilanchaq, who almost succeeded in setting fire to the town. The *Akbarnama* lays the blame of the failure to pacify Bengal at disagreements and mutual jealousies within the imperial camp.

The result of the failed campaigns after the rebellion of 1579 was that in 1586 Shahbaz Khan had to resort to a policy of conciliation and gifts to placate local rulers. Both the Arakanese 'Old Chronicle' and the *Akbarnama* report exchanges of gifts and diplomatic overtures between the two states at this time. The text of the *Akbarnama* is not entirely clear as to the extent of Mughal power in Bengal at the time. Eaton, on the authority of Beveridge's translation of the *Akbarnama* writes that: 'In February 1586, in fact, imperial commanders pushed all the way through the jungle and riverain tracts to Chittagong, on which occasion the city's Arakanese ruler sent gifts of elephants to the Mughals'. Sarkar on the other hand seems quite confident when he reports that at this time: 'The conquests now extended up to the port of *Sātgānw*'. The text of the *Akbarnama* reads: *tā bandar Sātgānw chīragī yāft*, meaning literally 'At the harbour of Satganw he [Shahbaz Khan] found victory'.<sup>98</sup>

There can be no doubt that Satganw should be read as Satgaon here. The same orthography is used for Satgaon on several other occasions in the *Akbarnama*. It is furthermore consistent with the rest of the narrative on the state of affairs in Bengal. In addition it is hard to perceive how a Mughal raiding party would have crossed through hostile *Bhati* to Chittagong without the assistance of a fleet.<sup>99</sup> According to the Arakanese chronicles and the *Rajamala*, the Arakanese king Man Phalaung from his basis in Chittagong campaigned in 1586 and 1587 successfully against Tripura, where he raided the capital Udaipur.<sup>100</sup> As noted earlier these military successes laid the basis for Arakanese control over the Chittagong area. It is not without its significance here that Man Phalaung in 1586 named his son Man Sawlha *anouk bhuran* of Chittagong. A Mughal raid on Chittagong at precise this time as suggested by Eaton seems therefore in the light of the preceding arguments highly unlikely.

<sup>98</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *Akbarnama*, Abdul Rahim ed. 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873-1887) p. 3:479; Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p.148 n.38, quoting Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, H. Beveridge trans. 3 vols. repr. (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 2000), p. 3:722; Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 206.

<sup>99</sup> 'This was one of the marvels of good fortune, for there was no great officer except Wazit Khan. Neither was there a fleet, which is the chief means of making war in that country, whereas the enemy had a large supply of war-boats.' Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, p. 3:722.

<sup>100</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 158-166.

*The campaigns of Rajah Man Singh*

The most successful instruments of war for the Mughal generals in Bengal during these early days thus proved to be ‘bribery, cajolery, diplomacy, impressive displays of military power, and sowing the seeds of dissention within the enemy ranks’.<sup>101</sup> In the *Akbarnama* the first eight years following Shahbaz Khan’s defeat are passed over almost in silence with regard to the affairs of Bengal. It is striking that the author of the *Akbarnama* suddenly remains silent on the subject of Bengal and shifts his attention from Bengal to campaigns of the Rajput general Raja Man Singh in the neighbouring province of Bihar in 1587, and later in Orissa (from the 1590s).<sup>102</sup> This silence on Mughal affairs in Bengal provides a strong indication of the lapse of imperial authority in Bengal. From the description of the Bihar and Orissa campaigns it becomes moreover apparent that the Mughals had realized that they had to control these two border areas before they could seriously take on local centres of power in Bengal. The *Akbarnama* does however give a few glimpses of the state of imperial authority in Bengal. Abul Fazl mentions several raids of local *zamindars* and Afghan warlords on Ghoraghat, Tajpur, Purnea, and Darbhanga in the 1590s.<sup>103</sup> It seems that the Bengal army was used in the conquest of Bihar and Orissa instead of being deployed in Bengal.<sup>104</sup>

The province of Orissa after the defeat of the Afghan sultans had become one of the areas that provided a safe haven for Afghan soldiers of fortune. Man Singh succeeded in removing the Afghans from Orissa and submitted local rulers to the Mughal emperor. The successes in Orissa however came at a prize. The Afghan chiefs Khwaja Sulaiman, Khwaja Usman, Sher Khan, and Haibat Khan revolted and in February 1593 plundered Satgaon. From Satgaon they moved on to Bhushna. At Bhushna they captured the fort, killed Chand Rai, son of the local *zamindar* Kedar Rai, and finally went off to join Isa Khan, who at that time still controlled Dhaka. The fort at Bhushna controlled overland access to south-eastern Bengal from west Bengal. The loss of Bhushna therefore was a severe blow to Mughal ambitions in the Southeast. This meant that after the Orissa campaigns the north-western frontier of Bengal had been more or less secured, but the south-eastern part of Bengal saw a concentration of warlords hostile to Mughal rule.<sup>105</sup> As we saw earlier in this Chapter the rise of Arakanese influence in south-eastern Bengal continued unabated during the same period

<sup>101</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p. 143; Gommans, *Mughal warfare*, p. 27.

<sup>102</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3: 779, 872, 878-880, 933-937, 940-941, 997.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem, pp. 3: 871-873

<sup>104</sup> Ibidem, pp. 3: 935.

<sup>105</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:968-969.

### *Conclusion*

From the foundation of Mrauk U in 1430 the Arakanese kingdom gradually expanded from its nucleus in the Kaladan valley to the rest of the Arakan littoral. The backgrounds of the success of the Mrauk U kingdom are however still unclear. In the previous Chapter the economic geography of Mrauk U was suggested as one of the factors contributing to the emergence of the Arakanese kingdom in the Kaladan area. Mrauk U was situated on a low ridge overlooking the Lemro and Kaladan rivers at a spot from where both plains could be easily controlled. The lands around Mrauk U are moreover the most fertile and the easiest to cultivate in the Arakan littoral. Mrauk U could therefore easily develop into a local market and provided its inhabitants security from aggression from the hill tribes and Upper Burmese polities. Mrauk U was also located far enough from the sea to be safe from sea-borne invasions as well as natural threats such as cyclones and tidal waves. Mrauk U thus provided a relatively stable and safe environment for the development of the Arakanese kingdom. Although culturally and ethnically the Arakanese are closely related to the Burmese, they also had historically close economic and political ties with Bengal. The foundation myth of the Mrauk U kingdom provided a clear example of the strong connection between Arakan and Bengal. Exactly how the Arakanese were able to prevail over their competitors in their bid to control Chittagong is however not clear yet. The role of a large group of Portuguese mercenaries could be a vital clue, but as we have seen these same Portuguese also provided military services to other local lords in south-eastern Bengal. It seems however that the Arakanese were better able to forge successful alliances with these Portuguese communities than other local powers. Perhaps Arakanese and Portuguese naval capabilities were complementary to such an extent that when combined they provided a military force that had no match in the Arakan-Bengal continuum.<sup>106</sup>

The fact that the Arakanese were successful in their wars in the Chittagong area is however beyond doubt. Man Pa in 1534 first defeated a Portuguese attempt to take Mrauk U and in 1542 there is definitive proof of an Arakanese conquest of Chittagong. In 1546 when the Burmese king Tabin-shwei-hti invaded Arakan, Man Pa was also able to resist the Burmese force. After the death of Man Tikkha it seems the Arakanese lost control over the city of Chittagong from the late 1550s. The conquests of Man Phalaung at the end of the sixteenth century secured Arakan's hold over Chittagong. Man Phalaung, nicknamed the 'Portuguese king', successfully built on the efforts made by Man Pa to control Chittagong. At the same time as the Arakanese entered south-eastern Bengal, the Mughals approached Bengal from the west. As both parties drove their armies towards the economic centre of Bengal a struggle between the Arakanese and the Mughals for control over Bengal seemed

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<sup>106</sup> For a good comparison of Burmese and Western naval capabilities in the early modern period see M.W. Charney, 'Shallow-draft boats, guns, and the Aye-ra-wa-ti. Continuity and change in ship structure and river warfare in precolonial Myanma', *Oriens Extremus* 40.1 (1997), pp. 16-63.

imminent. The following Chapters will describe how the Arakanese kingdom expanded its influence along the shores of the Bay of Bengal towards Burma and Bengal.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RISE OF MRAUK U INFLUENCE (1593-1612)

The start of Arakanese rule in Chittagong around 1590 was as we saw closely connected with the development of an Arakanese-Portuguese partnership. The account of Fernberger and the earlier involvement of the Portuguese mercenaries in the army of the Bengal sultans are testimony to the important role of these Portuguese communities in the Arakan-Bengal continuum. When Man Phalaung died in 1593 he was succeeded by his son king Man Raja-kri (1593-1612).<sup>1</sup> Man Raja-kri would continue the expansion of Arakanese rule along the shores of the Bay of Bengal. In 1598 he would take part in the siege of Pegu that would lead to the end of the first Toungoo dynasty in Burma in 1599. The early years of the seventeenth century would also witness the first armed confrontations between the Arakanese and the Mughals in south-eastern Bengal. This Chapter will describe the gradual expansion of Arakanese influence in Lower Burma and Bengal as well as the Mughal advance in Bengal. The steady development of an alliance between the Arakanese and the Portuguese communities in Chittagong will be seen to have played a crucial role in the expansion of the Arakanese kingdom.

#### 3.1 *The Portuguese community in Chittagong*

From the late sixteenth century the Mrauk U dynasty, most prominently represented by king Man Raja-kri, the *anauk-bhuran* Man Co Lha, and the *uparaja*<sup>2</sup> Man Khamaung, firmly embraced the Portuguese *chatins* as military advisors and allies. At the same time the Portuguese community in Bengal also tried to secure the allegiance of the *Estado da Índia* in their own bid for supremacy in Bengal. The Portuguese *chatins* promised king Philip I major benefits from tax revenues in Chittagong and Sandwip in return for official recognition and royal protection.<sup>3</sup> The reaction from the crown was however negative. In a response to a request from António de Sousa Godinho, Philip I wrote in 1591 that he saw no possibility to support the Portuguese *chatins* in this part of Bengal, stating that no new fortifications would

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<sup>1</sup> Following Guedes, Leider rejects contemporaneous claims made in Portuguese texts such as the *Questão* that Man Raja-kri was an usurper and not the son of Man Phalaung. It should be remembered that the *Questão* was written to legitimize the designs for Portuguese dominion in Lower Burma. Similar claims were made in the *Questão* regarding the succession by Man Phalaung. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 154,173.

<sup>2</sup> Crown-prince.

<sup>3</sup> King Philip II of Spain who ascended the Portuguese throne in 1580 as king Philip I of Portugal.



be built by the *Estado da Índia* in Bengal on account of the costs involved in keeping up the defences of such places.<sup>4</sup>

At the time when the *Estado da Índia* scorned the offers of the *chatin* community in Arakan and Bengal the Arakanese court showed a very different attitude towards the Portuguese community. The Portuguese were very well received in Arakan and were treated as vassals of the king.<sup>5</sup> In October 1599 Manuel de Mattos went to Mrauk U as a representative of the *chatin* community in Chittagong to pay tribute to Man Raja-kri. He was accompanied by the nobleman Jérôme de Monteiro and Father Fonseca bearing letters from the leader of the Jesuit mission in Bengal, Father Francis Fernandez. The delegation was welcomed at Mrauk U, and in January 1600 the king promised the Fathers land to built churches in Mrauk U and Chittagong. He also gave them rents for the maintenance of the new churches.<sup>6</sup> This mission characterizes the way in which the Arakanese Portuguese relationship functioned at the end of the sixteenth century. Essentially the Portuguese leaders had become local lords with estates allocated to them by the king in frontier areas.

It is however important to understand that the Portuguese community in Arakan or Bengal was not a homogenous entity. There existed several groups of Luso-Asians operating in the Bay of Bengal. That these groups had sometimes very different allegiances is borne out by a letter Father Francis Fernandez sent to Nicolas Pimenta. After the mission to Mrauk U Fernandez had left for Dianga, the Portuguese settlement on the Karnafuli river opposite Chittagong, where he started work on the new church with the help of Father André Boves. They built the church of St. John the Baptist, which was consecrated on 24 June 1600, the Saint's name day. To celebrate the consecration on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month two rival factions of the Portuguese community in Chittagong heard mass and dined together in order to celebrate their reconciliation.<sup>7</sup>

It is in fact possible to distinguish roughly two rival groups within the Portuguese communities in Chittagong. One group was headed by Manuel de Mattos in Chittagong and

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 12 January 1591 quoted in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Tail Wags the Dog', pp. 149-150 and Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 67. Vide infra Chapter 2 for Fernberger's description of De Sousa's involvement in Chittagonian politics.

<sup>5</sup> The French doctor François Bernier would write in the seventeenth century that: 'The kingdom of Rakan, or Mog, has harboured during many years Portuguese settlers. That kingdom was the place of retreat for refugees from Goa, Ceylon, Cochin, Melaka and other settlements held formerly by the Portuguese.' François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668* trans. and ed. A. Constable and V. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 174.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Francis Fernandez, dated. 22 December 1599 [1600 s.n.] in H. Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal, Arakan and Burma (1599-1600). A new version of the annual Letter from Goa (December 1, 1600) dated September 8, 1602', *Bengal Past and Present* 30 (1925), pp. 56-63 and Josson, *La mission du Bengale Occidental ou archidiocèse de Calcutta, province Belge de la Compagnie de Jésus* 2 vols. (Bruges; Imprimerie Sainte-Catherine, 1921), pp. 1.56-57.

<sup>7</sup> 'Le 24 juin 1600 eut lieu une reconciliation fameuse entre deux factions des Portugais les plus influentes du Bengale; les Pères les rassemblèrent à Dianga, "ces ennemis s'embrassèrent et dînèrent ensemble, après avoir ouï la messe et le sermon tout dirigé à ce sujet'. Quoted in H. Josson, *La mission du Bengale Occidental*, pp. 1:54-57.

Domingos Carvalho in Sripur, both working for the Arakanese and the Bengali *zamindar* Kedar Rai.<sup>8</sup> These Portuguese operated mainly in the Bengal area and assisted the Arakanese king and Kedar Rai in their attempts to assert control over south-eastern Bengal. On the other hand there was the group centred around Filipe de Brito, who is remembered most for his military actions in Burma after the fall of the Toungoo dynasty in 1599 when he was sent by the king of Arakan to defend the fort at Thanlyn (Syriam).

The story of the rise to power of Filipe de Brito and his violent death has been told many times. From the early seventeenth century until the present day historians have been fascinated by De Brito's career after the siege of Pegu in 1599.<sup>9</sup> From his rule as king of Thanlyn to his death by impalement in 1613 at the hands of the Burmese king Anaukpetlun the deeds of De Brito have captivated the attention of a wide audience over the centuries.<sup>10</sup> Filipe de Brito de Nicote enters in Burmese, Arakanese and Portuguese chronicles of the early seventeenth century because of his participation in the aftermath of the siege of Pegu in 1600. He was at that time reputedly already more than 20 years in Arakan and Bengal and is said to have been a native of Lisbon. Around the time De Brito arrived in Arakan the Arakanese still had to establish their power in Chittagong. In 1581 Man Co Lha was proclaimed the first *anauk-bhuran*, but the Arakanese were still consolidating their power in the Chittagong area. Man Co Lha and his father Man Phalaung had needed Portuguese help in 1589 to keep their grip on Chittagong as has been described in the previous Chapter and it is a distinct possibility that Filipe de Brito had fought on their side during these wars. De Brito at any rate held a *wilayat* from the Arakanese king in south-eastern Bengal, which had made him a rich and powerful man.

Contemporary European historians all mention that Filipe de Brito was given the honorific title *changá*<sup>11</sup> which according to Bocarro meant *bom homem*.<sup>12</sup> According to

<sup>8</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 1:285-288. Leider has also highlighted that it is wrong to speak of the Portuguese in the Arakan-Bengal continuum and that we can in fact identify several competing communities of Luso-Asians active in the area. Leider, 'The Portuguese communities along the Myanmar coast', pp. 54-77.

<sup>9</sup> Cayetano J. Socarras, 'The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe de Brito de Nicote', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 3.2 (1966), pp. 3-24.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Subrahmanyam, 'The tail wags the dog', pp. 149-160.

<sup>11</sup> Written alternatively as *xhenga* in a trans. of a letter by Man Raja-kri to the VOC in NA VOC 4778. Or *xenga* by Pieter Willemisz, the Dutch merchant who had been to Arakan for the VOC in 1608 who wrote: 'Philippe de Brito de Nicote, to whome he [Man Raja-kri] gave the name of Xenga, which is honeste'. W.H. Moreland ed., *Peter Floris, his voyage to the East Indies in the Globe 1611-1615. The contemporary translation [from the Dutch] of his Journal* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1934), p. 55. In Burmese chronicles as Na Janga (Nga Zinga) which Harvey related to the Panjabi *changa* meaning 'good'. In Na Mi's chronicle quoted in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 224 he is called *Na Cinga nay* neither of these names make any sense in Arakanese or Burmese. Daw Kyan questions the identification of Na Cinga/Na Janga with Filipe de Brito on the basis of the *Man Raja Kri Catam* where it is said that Na Anga was a son of Man Pa. Daw Kyan, 'Rakhine Man Raja Kri Catam', p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Bocarro has: '*Philippe de Brito de Nicote, de quem fazia mais conta que de todos, chamando-lhe por outro nome o changá, que quer dizer bom homem em sua lingua.*' A. Bocarro, *Decada 13 da Historia da India. Publicada de ordem da classe de sciencias moraes, politicasbellas-lettras da Academia real das sciencias de Lisboa* 2 vols. (Lisbon, 1876), p. 1:122; Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:88 writing twenty years after De Brito's

Manuel de Abreu Mousinho it reflected his quality as *vedor da fazenda* or treasurer in the service of the Arakanese king.<sup>13</sup> The Jesuit writers of the period claim that Filipe de Brito and Man Raja-kri had an excellent relationship. They assert that the former had twice restored the king to his throne when he was driven from it by his rebellious subjects.<sup>14</sup>

*Chatins* like Filipe de Brito had been given large estates by the Arakanese in the area known as *Porto Grande*, a term used for the area between the Karnafuli estuary and the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta. Nicolas Pimenta, writing in 1599, claimed that in return for assisting the Mrauk U kings in their wars the Portuguese *chatins* had received estates or *wilayat*<sup>15</sup> worth around 30,000 cruzados, a sum that does not seem wholly unacceptable.<sup>16</sup> The *wilayat* belonging to Filipe de Brito probably lay near Caranja, a port on the Karnafuli estuary a little higher up the river than the main Portuguese settlement at Dianga, for at least he returned to this place in 1601 after having completed his affairs in Arakan and Pegu. From Caranja De Brito wrote to the Father provincial of the Society of Jesus, Nicolas Pimenta.

The wealth of these local chiefs like Filipe de Brito can be gleaned from the letters of Jesuit missionaries to Bengal. De Brito had already given large sums of money to the residence of the Jesuits in Negapatnam and in his letter to Nicholas Pimenta he asked the Jesuits to allow him to be the founder of the College of Coutão on the Travancore coast. Pimenta reproduced his letter and added that 'this man is very rich and can found many colleges'. In return for his generosity De Brito asked the Jesuits to send him Fathers to console the Portuguese community in Bengal and Pegu.<sup>17</sup> The financial backing that Filipe de Brito promised the Jesuit order will certainly have influenced the reports Jesuit authors like Pimenta and Guerreiro sent back to Portugal, but they are usually our only source of

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death has yet another meaning: 'Philip de Britto known to the natives as Changa,, which means Great Captain'.

<sup>13</sup> Manuel de Abreu Mousinho, 'Breve Discurso em que se conta a conquista do Reino do Pêgu', trans. *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, p.113; Charney calls De Brito the chief of his palace guard, unfortunately he provides no source for this statement. M. Charney, 'The 1598-1599 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power into Lower Burma', *Journal of Asian History* 28.1 (1994), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação Anual*, p. 1:290 writes: 'Andava neste tempo no serviço de El-Rei de Arração um Português chamdo Filipe de Brito Nicote, homem honrado e muito rico, capitão de muitos Portugueses que trazia consign, o qual fizera a êste Rei de Arração muito grandes serviços, porque duas vezes o restituíu a seu reino, que seus naturais lhe tinham tirado levantado-se contra êle, e em tôdas as guerras que tivera, êste era o principal capitão'. Pieter Willemsz. wrote after his return to Europe c. 1620 that: 'The king of Arracan [Man Raja-kri] gave the towne or forte of Siriangh, lying upon the same river of Pegu, in keeping to the Portingalls, especially to Philippe de Brito de Nicote, to whome he gave the name of Xenga, which is honeste; which honour Xenga did afterwards requite very well, taking his sone prisoner some 3 or 4 yeares after and ransomed him for 110,000 Tangans and 10 galeas of ryce, so that the sayd Xenga is att this present yett dominerig, not caring for anybody.' in Moreland, *Peter Floris, his voyage to the East Indies in the Globe*, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> In European sources often rendered Bilatas, the recipient of which they styled Bilatteers, originally a Persian term *wilayat*, an estate. Also meaning a bureaucrat, a governor of a part of the empire (13th-14th cent.), who has to raise a number of troops if the king asks for them, and is responsible to pay them from the revenue of his *wilayat* of which he also has to sent a part to the king. W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian system of Moslem India. An Historical Essay with Appendices* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1929), pp. 216-223, 278.

<sup>16</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 1: 286. Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 175.

<sup>17</sup> H. Hosten trans. and ed., 'Fr. N. Pimenta's Annual of Margão, December 1, 1601', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 23 (1927), pp. 95-97.

information on the *chatin* community in Chittagong. Filipe de Brito was thus not as Leider has suggested a marginal figure before he took charge of the fort at Thanlyin following the fall of Pegu in 1598.<sup>18</sup>

How had these Portuguese warrior colonists become so rich and influential? How can we explain the very favourable disposition of the Arakanese kings towards them? One explanation is given by Guerreiro who wrote that the king of Arakan, also known as the *Mogos*, was the most powerful king in Bengal and a great friend of the Portuguese. This friendship he said stemmed from the fact that the Portuguese assisted the Arakanese king in his wars. In return for their services the king had given these Portuguese amongst other things lands worth more than 30,000 Cruzados (c. 70,000 Tanka) in revenues.<sup>19</sup>

The Portuguese community had thus become so powerful that the Arakanese kings had integrated them as their vassals into the Arakanese kingdom. In return the *chatins* assisted them in their wars in Bengal and Burma. This is first illustrated by the war Man Raja-kri fought in Lower Burma against the Burmese emperor Nandabayin which will be described in the following paragraphs.

### 3.2 Lower Burma: Arakan and the downfall of the First Toungoo Empire

During the last decade of the sixteenth century Nandabayin (1581-1599), the last emperor of the first Toungoo dynasty, was confronted by a series of uprisings in Lower Burma. It appears that local lords, *myo-za* ('town-eaters') shifted their allegiance from Nandabayin to large principalities outside his direct control. These principalities were ruled by more or less independent *bayins* or kings.<sup>20</sup> Ayutthaya, Toungoo, Prome and Chiangmai were the most important of these *bayin* centres, while the capital of the 'high king' or emperor Nandabayin was at Pegu. The incessant warfare that resulted from the slow disintegration of the First Toungoo dynasty prompted large groups of Mon to flee to Arakan in 1593, thus increasing the Arakanese power-base to a large extent.<sup>21</sup> In 1594 king Naresuan of Ayutthaya captured Pegu's possessions on the Kra Isthmus. After declaring an embargo on the movement of foodstuffs from his own province to the capital at Pegu, the *bayin* of Toungoo sought an alliance with the king of Arakan to mount a joint attack on Nandabayin in 1596.<sup>22</sup> Around the same time the Arakanese king Man Raja-kri sought a marriage alliance with Pegu, but it

<sup>18</sup> Leider, 'The Portuguese communities along the Myanmar coast', pp. 65-66.

<sup>19</sup> 'Assim como El-Rei de Arração, que também se chama dos mogos, é o mais poderoso rei de todos os que há em Bengala, assim era o mor amigo dos Portugueses que nela havia, o qual se servia muito deles e pelo muito que o ajudavam em suas guerras, tinha dado a diversos, em terras e comedias, mais de trinta mil cruzados de renda'. Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:286.

<sup>20</sup> Arakanese: *Bhuran*.

<sup>21</sup> Hmannan Yazawindawgyi Nai Thien tr., 'Intercourse between Burma and Siam as recorded in Hmannan Yazawindawgyi', *Journal of the Siam Society* 8 (1911), p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Lieberman, *Administrative cycles*, p. 42-43.

seemed he was turned down and given an indignant response by Nandabayin.<sup>23</sup> Whether the rude reception Man Raja-kri's ambassadors encountered at the Pegu court was a *casus belli* is difficult to ascertain. In the Arakanese chronicles no definitive cause for the resulting involvement in the conflict between Toungoo and Pegu is given, apart from the prospect of plunder. According to Leider it seems unlikely that the Arakanese king suddenly harboured ambitions to become supreme king of Burma.<sup>24</sup> In October 1597 the eldest son of Man Raja-kri, the future king Man Khamaung (1612-1622), departed with a fleet for Thanlyn, a fort in the Irrawaddy delta near Pegu and across the river from Dagon<sup>25</sup>, he took with him a substantial force and he took the city without any difficulty. Man Raja-kri followed a month later with a second force.<sup>26</sup>

The siege of Pegu started in 1598 and ended in December 1599 when Nandabayin finally surrendered to the Toungoo *bayin* and Man Raja-kri.<sup>27</sup> The two victorious kings took impressive war booty from Pegu with them. Man Raja-kri received from Nandabayin several highly revered statues<sup>28</sup>, his third daughter and two of his sons as hostages and most important of all, Man Raja-kri received the revered White Elephant an important symbol for any *cakravartin* king. With these new possessions the Arakanese king made a triumphant entry in his capital at the end of the year 1599.<sup>29</sup>

Charney has questioned the idea that Nandabayin surrendered to both the Toungoo *bayin* and the Arakanese king in December 1599. He has suggested that Man Raja-kri was absent from Lower Burma during the fall of Pegu. Charney suggests that the Arakanese king had pressing business to attend to on his kingdom's north-western border and that the Arakanese contribution to the siege continued at a more limited level with Man Khamaung in command of a number of Arakanese ships to help the king of Toungoo.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, pp. 1:121-122.

<sup>24</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 214-215; Charney, 'The siege of Pegu', pp. 39-57 favours the idea that this motive in fact was important.

<sup>25</sup> Today Dagon is situated in Yangon (Rangoon).

<sup>26</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 54; See Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 215 for a thorough discussion on dating the siege. Dates chosen here are based on Leider and follow Sandamala's chronicle. During 1599 large numbers of Portuguese soldiers went from Bengal to Burma to fight for Man Raja-kri. Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 73 cf. Pierre Du Jarric, *Histoire des choses plus memorables* (Bordeaux: S. Millanger, 1608), pp. 627-629 Jarric writes: '*Ils vindrent à composition qui fut telle. Le Roy de Pegu se rédit à celui de Tangu (parcequ'il estoit son beau frere, marié avec une sieni soeur)*'.

<sup>28</sup> For instance a statue of Eravata, Indra's elephant. Some of these statues are still to be seen in Mandalay at the Mahamuni pagoda, see also Taw Sein Ko, 'The bronze figures in the Arakan pagoda, Mandalay', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 6 (1916), pp. 19-21.

<sup>29</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:44-45; Du Jarric, *Histoire*, pp. 627-629. See also Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 217-218 for a description of all the treasure taken from Pegu to Toungoo and Arakan and the *Relatione del Tesoro che ha preso Filippo Brito di Nicote capitano portoghese nell'India Orientale* published in in M.A. Marques Guedes, *Interferência e Integração dos Portugueses na Birmânia, ca. 1580-1630* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1994), pp. 225-232.

<sup>30</sup> The prominent role accorded to Man Khamaung during the siege is supported by Bocarro for at least the early stages of the siege in 1598, but contradicted by Guerreiro. Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:44-45; Du Jarric, *Histoire*, pp. 627-629. Charney, 'The siege of Pegu', p. 45. At the end of December 1599 or early January 1600

After Nandabayin's surrender and the subsequent departure of Man Raja-kri, Nandabayin and his heir apparent Minyé Kyawzwa were both murdered at the behest of the Toungoo *uparaja* Nat-shin-naung. He apparently felt that they were obstacles in the way of his succession to the status of emperor.<sup>31</sup> The Toungoo *bayin* now emphasized his role as successor to Bayin-naung's empire. The murders of the emperor and his son were in stark contrast to earlier promises made by the Toungoo *bayin* that he would 'reverence Nandabayin like a Buddha'.<sup>32</sup> The Toungoo *bayin* now styled himself Mahadhammaraja.<sup>33</sup>

When the king of Arakan heard that the Toungoo *bayin* had broken his treaty with him and Nandabayin, he collected an army to march to Lower Burma and claim his part in the spoils resulting from the murder of the High king. The Jesuit João André Boves<sup>34</sup> writing on the 28 March 1600 left an account of the return of the Arakanese to Lower Burma after the fall of Pegu:

Hearing that the king of Tangu [Toungoo] had evaded the terms of the treaty, he [Man Raja-kri] hastened at once to the fortress of Macao (On the Pegu river), whither the king of Pegu had formerly betaken himself and called out all the Portuguese whom he had presented with fields and revenues in Bengala, telling them to be in readiness in case he had to fight him of Tangu. Among them was Filipe de Brito, than whom there was not among the Portuguese a wealthier man or one more acceptable to the king. He insisted that one of us should go with them. Fr. Francis Fernandez laid the duty on me. On the 5<sup>th</sup> before the Kalends of March [25 February 1600], I embarked with the said Filipe de Brito and (God giving us good wind) on the fifteenth day we landed at the harbour of Sirian [Thanlyn].<sup>35</sup>

The description Boves has given of Pegu after it had been sacked by the army of Toungoo is telling. The Toungoo *bayin* had razed to the ground enormous temples complexes, burnt down villages and everywhere the traces of large scale killings were still to be seen. Pegu was turned into a desert.<sup>36</sup>

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Man Raja-kri was at Mrauk U receiving Manuel de Mattos as *capitão mor* of the Portuguese community in Bengal and a Jesuit delegation, vide infra. Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 124 does mention an uprising in Arakan, but dates it August 1602. Bocarro, *Decada 13*, pp. 122-124. It is only after the siege has ended in 1600 and Man Raja-kri has returned to Lower Burma that Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:47 mentions the presence of the *príncipe* alongside his father

<sup>31</sup> Lieberman, *Administrative Cycles*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> John Andrew Boves alias Francis Boves was born at Messina 1569 and died in Malabar 1634. Hosten, 'Fr.N. Pimenta's Annual of Margão', p. 95.

<sup>35</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', pp. 73-74. Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 1:47-49 apparently uses the same letter by Andrew Boves as his source.

<sup>36</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 74. Lieberman, *Administrative Cycles*, p. 44, attributes the destruction of Pegu to the Arakanese.

The Arakanese could not do more than collecting the silver and other metals which the Toungoo *bayin* left behind. André Boves estimated these leftovers to be worth more than three million gold ducats. Apart from these precious metals Man Raja-kri could also add some 3,200 cannon to his magazines.<sup>37</sup>

The Burmese chronicle *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* attributes the departure of the Toungoo army from Pegu in March 1600, just before the arrival of the Arakanese army, to the threat posed to Lower Burma by the Ayutthayan king Naresuan.<sup>38</sup> Although the arrival of Naresuan in Martaban could certainly have been one of the reasons to leave Pegu in a hurry and leave behind such a large part of that immense treasure, the arrival of a potentially hostile Arakanese army should also be taken into consideration.

The arrival of the king of Ayutthaya and the *bayin* of Chiangmai, the brother of the deceased Nandabayin, also caused alarm in the camp of the Arakanese. For a while Man Raja-kri did not know what to do with this new threat.<sup>39</sup> Eventually Man Raja-kri sent an expeditionary force consisting of 600 *jalias*<sup>40</sup> to Martaban to attack the supply lines of Naresuan.<sup>41</sup> The Arakanese attacks on the Ayutthayan supply lines finally forced Naresuan to break off the attack on Toungoo in May 1600, just before the start of the monsoon.<sup>42</sup> After the unsuccessful attack on Toungoo Naresuan returned to Martaban where he pledged an oath of allegiance to the local Mon and he appointed or recognized the nephew of the governor Wingaw as lord of Martaban with the title of *Banha Dala*.<sup>43</sup>

After the retreat of Naresuan the king of Arakan sent his *ko-ran-kri* together with Filipe de Brito to the Toungoo *bayin* to settle their dispute over the division of the treasure captured at Pegu.<sup>44</sup> Manrique writing some forty years later mentions a war between the Toungoo *bayin* and the Arakanese over the Pegu treasure in which the Portuguese soldiers played a prominent part. In Manrique's version of the story the Toungoo *bayin* would only have made over the large treasures of Pegu, including the white elephant after a bloody war

<sup>37</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 74. cf Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia or, The history of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portuguese* Trans. J. Stevens repr. (Farnborough: Gregg International Publishers, 1971), p. 3:121 and Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:47.

<sup>38</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 75; Mousinho writes that the Arakanese king actually went to Burma to help the Toungoo *bayin* and engage the Siamese emperor in battle, see his *Breve Discurso*, p. 112.

<sup>40</sup> A *Jalias*, *Galeas* or *Jelias* consisted of a single tree trunk and had thirty to fifty oars. It was extremely swift and was likened by the Portuguese to the *myoparo* a light piratical vessel. The rowers were armed with swords and lances. P.v.d.B[urg], *Curieuse beschrijving van de gelegenheid, zeden, godsdienst en ommegang, van verscheyden Oost-Indische gewesten en machtige Landschappen. En inzonderheid van Golconda en Pegu. Alsmede een pertinente aanwijzing, hoe men door heel Indien, alle plaatsen op zijn tijd moet bevaren* (Rotterdam: Isaak Naeranus, 1677), p. 118; Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, pp. 56-57 cf. Mousinho, *Breve Discurso*, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, pp. 57-60. *Băna* is a Mon title frequently occurring in proper names and designating a local lord or king. See Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 227-228. Bocarro uses *Banha* and *Banha Dala* interchangeable, *Decada 13*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>44</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 126.

with the Arakanese in which the latter emerged victorious, plundering and sacking Toungoo.<sup>45</sup> The pages in the *Itinerario de las Misiones Orientales* that deal with the capture of the white elephant by Man Raja-kri are different from the rest of the *Itinerario* and stand out because Manrique at several stages throughout the narrative reminds his reader that he is relating this history on the basis of information from Burmese and Arakanese histories.<sup>46</sup> As Manrique stayed for two prolonged periods at the royal capital Mrauk U it does seem credible that he was aware of Arakanese and Burmese versions of the wars in Lower Burma through contact with local chronicle traditions.

Should we then take Bocarro's summary comment that Filipe de Brito and the Arakanese admiral-general went to Toungoo to settle disputes around the division of the war booty from the Pegu campaign to mean that they conquered and sacked Toungoo or that they negotiated with him under the pressure of an armed Arakanese presence?

After the Arakanese and the Toungoo *bayin* had settled their differences over the division of the treasures the Arakanese king left for Arakan. The Arakanese left a small contingent of Arakanese and Portuguese soldiers at Thanlyn under the leadership of Filipe de Brito.<sup>47</sup> Man Raja-kri ordered them to build a fort in Thanlyn.<sup>48</sup> The king encouraged the rebellious Mon and 'all those who were roaming about the woods and mountains' to come and settle in Thanlyn.<sup>49</sup> Lower Burma was an unsettled place after the wars that had raged there. Trade had come to a standstill and large centres had been devastated by fire and murder. The new lords needed to attract people to their cities in order to extract revenues. As André Boves often quoted remarks illustrate, the Arakanese king was a king without people in Lower Burma.

Filipe de Brito also left Lower Burma after the monsoon period of 1600 to return to Arakan<sup>50</sup>, but he soon realized the enormous potential of a customs house at the strategic place that Thanlyn was. Although commerce and industry of Lower Burma had been ruined by 1600, he envisaged repopulating the area and attracting the commerce back to the mouths of the Irrawaddy. Around 1600 the trade of Thanlyn was much diminished and trade from

<sup>45</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:266-270.

<sup>46</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p.1:238 where he says: 'This took place, as the ancient histories of the monarchy of the Bramas tell us' and on page 1:240: 'At the end of this period says the chronicle I have quoted'; page 1:244 'Turning once more to the chronicle'; page 1:248 'so the Brama chronicler tells us'; page 1:257 'The army he collected was so vast that I am afraid to give it in positive numbers, owing to the different opinions recorded by the Brama authorities'; page 1:261 'I will give a summary account of the result from the record I copied out of the history mentioned above'; page 1:262 'Most Brama and Ava authors agree'; page 1:268 'So I will omit what is recorded in the Brama chronicles and only note what I myself saw' and page 1:274 'according to the Magh historian'. Apart from this the *Itinerario* adopts at several points in the story the point of view of a native narrator/chronicler when talking about the Portuguese.

<sup>47</sup> Leider, 'The Portuguese communities along the Myanmar Coast', p. 67.

<sup>48</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', pp. 73-76.

<sup>50</sup> In June 1600 Filipe de Brito was still at Thanlyn, from where he returned to Caranja during the dry season. Letter from De Brito to Pimenta in Hosten, 'Fr. N. Pimenta's Annual of Margão, Dec. 1, 1601', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 23 (1927), pp. 83-107.



Ava, Siam, Cambodja, and Luang Prabang was now flowing through Arakan, Tenasserim, and Martaban to the Bay of Bengal and beyond.<sup>51</sup>

The letters and reports emanating from the circle around Filipe de Brito are full of his ambitions to make Thanlyn the new entrepôt of Lower Burma and to attach Lower Burma to the *Estado da Índia*.<sup>52</sup> So much so that De Brito was willing to leave the considerable estate he had received from the Arakanese in Bengal for this new frontier in Lower Burma. Reading one of these reports, the *Questão acerca do direito do reino de Pegu e como pode pertencer a Sua Majestade* one senses the limitless possibilities that this pioneer envisaged for establishing a prosperous city on the Irrawaddy delta under Portuguese control.

The Arakanese kings on the other hand seemed to be quite willing to leave such pioneering work to De Brito and supported his efforts in the first three years. After all Filipe had promised the Arakanese king that he would send a large part of the revenue to Mrauk U.<sup>53</sup> On top of this the Arakanese king now enjoyed new revenues from trade that had earlier flowed through Lower Burma as the majority of this trade was now passing over the Arakan Yoma via Mrauk U to the Bay of Bengal and so proved to be a major source of income to the Mrauk U dynasty. This is a possible further explanation why the Arakanese king would allow a limited presence of the Portuguese at Thanlyn.

The potential of Thanlyn as a tax revenue was clearly realized by Filipe de Brito and the Arakanese king alike. For the privilege of building the fort and the right to erect a customs house in Thanlyn Filipe de Brito had paid the Arakanese king large amounts of money. An Augustinian resident of Pegu in the early seventeenth century claimed it had amounted to 30,000 cruzados in cash, and goods which were worth 15,000 pardous<sup>54</sup>, while Guerreiro mentions that in 1602 De Brito made Man Raja-kri and his counsellors large presents worth 17,000 cruzados.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time there were several local Mon and Burmese lords in the area vying for power with the Portuguese. For the Arakanese this was a favourable situation. The local Mon Lords, the *Banha Dala* and *Banha Lao* as well as the Burmese *bayin* of Prome had all pledged their loyalty to Mrauk U. And they could serve as an important check on the Portuguese power and vice versa.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 2:318.

<sup>52</sup> The *Apontamentos das couzas que dá o Reino de Pegu* referred to in Subrahmanyam, 'The tail wags the dog', pp. 159-160, published in Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, pp. 197-202 and the *Questão acerca do direito do reino de Pegu e como pode pertencer a Sua Majestade* in Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, pp. 202-224.

<sup>53</sup> *Questão*, §12.

<sup>54</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'The tail wags the dog', p. 151.

<sup>55</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:292

<sup>56</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:292; Mousinho, *Breve Discurso*, p. 115.

As soon as the Arakanese king had left Lower Burma with his army the contest for power in Lower Burma began in full earnest. When Filipe de Brito left Thanlyn at the end of 1600 to take care of his estates in Bengal and probably to negotiate with Man Raja-kri on the terms of the payment of revenue from Thanlyn to Mrauk U, he secretly ordered his captains, João de Oliva, Paulo del Rego, and Salvador Ribeiro de Sousa to take control of the area; hoping that his great credit with Man Raja-kri would bear him out.<sup>57</sup> These three men performed their job so well that they even became known as the founders of the settlement and that Salvador Ribeiro later even claimed to be the architect of the plan.<sup>58</sup>

The *Breve Discurso*, an apology written by Manuel de Abreu Mousinho for Salvador Ribeiro, gives a full report of the conflict between the Portuguese force in Thanlyn and the local Mon and Burmese lords. Although Mousinho wrote to defend Ribeiro's claim of being the conqueror of Thanlyn against Filipe de Brito's claim that he was the author of the plan, it remains the only detailed account that has survived of the struggle between the Portuguese and local Mon and Burmese lords during the period of January 1600 to 1603.

In January 1601, when Filipe de Brito was in Bengal, Mousinho writes that Ribeiro and his fellow captains were attacked by a force from the *bayin* of Prome, apparently acting on orders of Man Raja-kri who seemed to have been worried about the speed with which the Portuguese were building their fortress at Thanlyn. According to Mousinho Man Raja-kri had written to the Prome *bayin*, the *Banha Dala*<sup>59</sup>, and the *Banha Lao* that they should seek to curb the growing influence of the Portuguese. Ribeiro and his followers defeated the first attack by the Prome *bayin* and subsequently sought a confrontation with the *Banha Lao*. This Mon lord who had already emerged victorious in a recent battle with the Toungoo *bayin*, now seemed a potential threat to Ribeiro and he acted to cut short the *Banha*'s hopes of succeeding to the Pegu throne by killing him in a night attack on his camp on 27 February 1601.<sup>60</sup>

After these first two victories the *Banha Dala* laid siege to the new fort at Thanlyn at several instances during the period 1601 to 1603. All the attempts of driving the Portuguese out were however unsuccessful, and in the end Salvador Ribeiro was acknowledged as a local lord by the Toungoo, Prome, Ava, and Chiangmai *bayins*.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:127-128.

<sup>58</sup> Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:127-128 cf. Bocarro, *Decada 13*, pp. 128-131 and Mousinho, 'Breve Discurso em que se conta a conquista do Reino do Pégu', trans. *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 16.2 (1926), pp. 98-138.

<sup>59</sup> It seems likely that this is the same person as the *Banha Dala* of Martaban, who had also allied himself to Ayutthaya, see *infra*, but Leider has his doubts, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>60</sup> Mousinho, *Breve Discurso*, pp. 115-119. Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:292 implies Filipe de Brito himself was involved in the attack, which seems improbable as he was at the time in Bengal. Faria y Sousa writes that the Arakanese had left the *Banha Dala* in control of the new fort at Thanlyn and that De Brito ordered his three captains to attack the *Banha*. Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:127-128.

<sup>61</sup> Mousinho, *Breve Discurso*, p. 115. Guedes tends to follow Mousinho and accepts the claim that Salvador Ribeiro de Sousa was crowned king of Pegu. She argues that he abdicated in favour of Filipe de Brito de Nicote who in turn left the throne to Philip II king of Portugal and Spain. In return Filipe de Brito was created capitão-geral do Sirão e das partes de Pegu. Guedes, 'Salvador Ribeiro de Sousa um Rei sem Reino. Vestígios da

The skirmishes in Lower Burma apparently did not affect the relationship of the Portuguese in Thanlyin with Man Raja-kri. They regularly sent tribute to Arakan.<sup>62</sup> While Ribeiro was establishing Portuguese power in Lower Burma De Brito went on a diplomatic tour. He travelled in 1602 to Goa to seek an alliance with the *Estado da Índia*. This mission to Goa had the blessing of the Arakanese king. Guerreiro writes that an ambassador of the Vice-Roy, Gaspar da Silva, who had just arrived in Mrauk U, advised De Brito and Man Raja-kri to seek assistance from the *Estado da Índia* in the Arakanese battle against the Mughal general Man Singh in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>63</sup> Guerreiro claimed that the king of Arakan expressed his willingness that De Brito should go to India to obtain ships to help him against the Great Mughal.<sup>64</sup> In Goa De Brito was received by the *Viso-Rey* Aires de Saldanha. And apparently the mission proceeded so well that De Brito eventually married the niece, or maybe even the illegitimate daughter of the *Viso-Rey*, Luísa de Saldanha. De Brito and Aires de Saldanha made a deal that secured official support of the *Estado da Índia* for the Portuguese settlement in Thanlyin. Over the years the deal meant that: First, the Portuguese crown would get a customs house at Thanlyin. Secondly, the *Estado da Índia* and the crown would support Filipe De Brito with an armada, men and supplies in the struggle against potential adversaries in Lower Burma. Thirdly, Filipe de Brito was created *Fidalgo da Casa Real* and he received the Habit of Christ. And lastly De Brito got the jurisdiction over all the Portuguese in Bengal and Burma. In the end the customs house in Thanlyin never sent a sum of any significance to Goa.<sup>65</sup>

From both sides everything now seemed set for a period of lasting cooperation. The Arakanese and the *Estado*, as represented by Filipe de Brito had agreed to unite their forces in a war against growing Mughal supremacy in Bengal. But as described above, 1602 marked a turning point in this respect. At the end of the year 1602 the Mrauk U rulers decided that Portuguese influence in the Arakanese littoral was becoming too strong and they subsequently decided to stop that process. According to Portuguese sources this change in attitude towards their presence was occasioned by a hostile Muslim community in Mrauk U.<sup>66</sup>

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Birmânia Saiscentista em Portugal', *Revista de Cultura* 33 (Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1997), pp. 70-71.

<sup>62</sup> Prince Damrong, 'Our Wars with the Burmese (Row Robe Phama in Thai by Prince Damrong translated into English)', trans. Phra Phraison Salarak Thien Subindu alias U Aung Thein, *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 38.2 (1955); 40.2 (1957); 40.2A (1958), 40.2 (1957), p. 206 and Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 225; *Questão*, passim..

<sup>63</sup> The *Questão*, the document written to legitimize the Portuguese takeover of Thanlyin, claimed that Gaspar da Silva da Cunha convinced the Arakanese king to cede this port in Lower Burma to the Portuguese Crown, see Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 225.

<sup>64</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p1:291-292.

<sup>65</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'The tail wags the dog', p. 152.

<sup>66</sup> More specifically the king of Masulipatnam's ambassadors, see Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 1:291; 2:137-138.

These Muslims, mostly traders, had strong ties with big merchants on the Coromandel coast and they probably feared Portuguese competition in their Bengal and Burma trade.

Whatever the exact reason at the end of 1602 Man Raja-kri took action against the expansion of Portuguese power in the Bay of Bengal. In the section above it was already noted that Domingos Carvalho and Manuel de Mattos had at that time occupied the strategically placed island of Sandwip, and now it seemed that in Burma Filipe de Brito was also acquiring a position too strong for the liking of Man Raja-kri. In any case 1602 marks the beginning of a closely orchestrated attack by the Mrauk U rulers on the Portuguese leadership in this part of the Bay of Bengal. Charney has chosen precisely this period as a decisive turning point in Arakanese. The main argument he puts forward to choose this date as an important caesura in Arakanese history is that from 1603 onwards Arakan lost control over Lower Burma. Arakanese control over Lower Burma had however been ineffective and short (1599-1603); it is hard to imagine what the impact of this 'loss of control' could have had on the Mrauk U kingdom.<sup>67</sup>

In the following paragraphs the development of Arakanese and Mughal power in Bengal from the late sixteenth century is described before returning to the confrontation between the Portuguese communities and the Arakanese after 1602.

### 3.3 Bengal: The first Arakanese-Mughal encounters

After the defeat of the Mughal general Shahbaz Khan in 1584 at the hands of the local *zamindar* Isa Khan the Mughals had been forced to retreat from Bengal. But in 1594 Akbar sent Raja Man Singh as his new governor to Bengal (1594-1606) with the objective of crushing local resistance. Man Singh was also nominated guardian of Akbar's son prince Salim. Five thousand of the troops allotted to the prince were given *jagirs* in Bengal and Man Singh himself was as well allotted his jagir in this province. The objective obviously was that the Mughal officers would capture these *jagirs* themselves. The first success of Man Singh as *subahdar*, was the capture of Bhushna by his son Himmat Singh in 1595. The control over Bhushna was essential for any campaign directed at eastern Bengal. Bhushna was one of the forts that commanded the road to Dhaka, which was to provide the main gate of entry into the lands East of the Brahmaputra. In 1595 Man Singh set up a new capital for the Mughal government in western Bengal at Rajmahal (or Akbarnagar) close to the old traditional capitals at Tanda, Patna or Gaur, but safer from the attacks of the navies of the *Bhara Bhuiyas* and the Arakanese. From this new capital Man Singh started a campaign to bring the Eastern part of Bengal, by the Mughals termed *Bhati*, under control of the imperial government.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Charney, 'Rise of a mainland trading state' and Idem, 'Crisis and reformation'.

<sup>68</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 211.

Eaton wrongly assumed that the distinction between *Bhati* and Bangala in early Mughal sources roughly corresponds with the present frontier between Bangladesh and West Bengal. Abdul Karim convincingly showed that with *Bhati* the Mughals referred to the low lands of eastern Dhaka and Mymensingh, the north-western part of Tripura and the south-western part of Sylhet, watered by the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and their tributaries.<sup>69</sup> The advance of the Mughal general forced Isa Khan and his Afghan followers to fall back behind the Brahmaputra river, and much of Isa Khan's territories fell into the hands of Man Singh. During the rains of 1595 Man Singh decided to stay near the Brahmaputra river and built a fort he named Salimnagar at Sherpur Murcha (near Bogra).

While building the fort Man Singh was cut off from his headquarters in Rajmahal, when Kedar Rai and Khwajah Sulaiman Lohani recaptured the strategic fort of Bhushna, thus effectively blocking the main route between Dhaka and West Bengal. Only on 20 June 1596 was Bhushna recovered by Man Singh's son Durjan Singh. Khwajah Sulaiman Lohani was killed during the siege, but Kedar Rai escaped and made his way east to join Isa Khan.<sup>70</sup>

The following years Isa Khan was to exploit his superiority in riverain warfare. In the rainy season of 1596 he harassed Mughal troops encamped near Ghoragat in North Bengal and was only driven off by Man Singh's forces after water levels had fallen so much that Isa Khan's fleet risked running aground.<sup>71</sup> The following year an expedition under the command of Durjan Singh was directed towards Isa Khan's seat, Katrabo. The expedition ended in a rout of the Mughal fleet near Dhaka. Durjan Singh was killed during the fight, as were many of his soldiers. The defeat of Durjan Singh's fleet again proved to Mughal officials the need for a further development of the naval forces in Bengal<sup>72</sup>

In 1598 Man Singh requested to be posted in Ajmer and had eventually his grandson Maha Singh appointed as his deputy under the guardianship of Pratap Singh Kachhwaha. In 1599 Isa Khan died and in 1600 the Afghan warlord Usman Sajawal revolted and recovered parts of Orissa. The revolt of the Afghan nobles prompted Man Singh to return to Bengal. In 1601 he subdued the Afghan rebels.

In 1602 another Afghan warlord, Usman, crossed the Brahmaputra and laid siege to the Mughal *thana* of Bhalwa (Bhawal). Man Singh marched to Bhalwa and defeated Usman. This victory left the Mughal governor in possession of a large part of Usman's fleet and artillery. From Bhalwa Man Singh proceeded to Dhaka, and in February 1602 he sent an army across the Ichamati to attack the son of Isa Khan, Musa Khan and Kedar Rai. Musa Khan and

<sup>69</sup> Abdul Karim, 'Bhati as mentioned by Abu'l Fazl and Mirza Nathan', A.B.M. Habibullah, *Nalini Kanta Bhattachali commemoration volume. Essays on archaeology, art, history, literature and philosophy of the Orient, dedicated to the memory of dr. Nalini Kanta Bhattachali [1888-1947 A.D.]* (Dhaka: Dhaka Museum, 1966), pp 311-323, 322-323; Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p.146

<sup>70</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:1023, 1042, 1043, 1059.

<sup>71</sup> Ibidem, p. 3:1063.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, p. 3:1093.

Kedar Rai, together with their allies, blocked riverain traffic, and thus had an effective hold on trade in eastern Bengal. Man Singh without the help of a fleet forded the Ichamati river with his elephants and horses and drove Musa Khan and his allies back to Sonargaon.<sup>73</sup>

In 1602 Domingos Carvalho, in the service of Kedar Rai, together with Manuel de Mattos, captured Sandwip from the Mughals who had in their turn taken it from Kedar Rai. The island of Sandwip not only had an enormous strategical importance, as it controlled the entrance to the Karnafuli estuary, but it was also reputed to supply the whole of Bengal with salt.<sup>74</sup> This move by the Portuguese prompted Man Raja-kri to move against Sandwip. The Arakanese king tried to conquer Sandwip with the help of Kedar Rai. In the winter of 1602 Man Raja-kri sent a fleet to Bengal and on 8 November 1602 he defeated Manuel de Mattos. Two days later Domingos Carvalho arrived with relief from Sandwip.<sup>75</sup> The Portuguese were victorious over the Arakanese on 10 November 1602.

While Kedar Rai, the Arakanese and the Portuguese were fighting battles amongst themselves, the Mughal general Man Singh in 1602 established his new operational headquarters at Dhaka.<sup>76</sup> Man Singh now placed his main forces at a position much closer to the territories of Kedar Rai and the other *Bhara Bhuiyas*, at what was to become the future Mughal capital in Bengal. The main reason for this change of capital was the strategic position of Dhaka for an army wanting to control East Bengal. The move had been facilitated by the gradual submission of the area between Dhaka and Rajmahal between the 1570s and 1600.<sup>77</sup> The occupation of the fort at Bhushna is a good example. The new location of the Mughal headquarters in Bengal and the expansion of Arakanese power from Chittagong during the reign of Man Raja-kri meant that now for the first time the armies of the two contenders for the wealth of south-eastern Bengal would meet.

#### *The Mughal-Arakanese wars of 1602-1604*

In 1602 Arakanese forces attacked Sandwip. The following year the Arakanese attacked the area near Sonargaon and Dhaka. The confusion in the Mughal reports of this encounter between Arakanese and Mughal forces supports the hypothesis that the 1603 battles at the confluence of Bengal's great rivers were the first major contacts between the two parties. These battles would be the first in a war that would last for almost the remainder of the century. Early in 1603 the Arakanese probably took the fort at Trimohani near Dhaka, but

<sup>73</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 2:1214-1215.

<sup>74</sup> Du Jarric quoted in Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, pp. 67-73.

<sup>75</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:287.

<sup>76</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:1214-1215.

<sup>77</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p. 149.

apparently they were repulsed again after a land battle.<sup>78</sup> The Arakanese exploited their naval superiority and used their ships to cannonade the Mughal *thanahs* avoiding as much as possible to give battle on land. The following months the Arakanese and Kedar Rai made a joined attack and sailed for the *thana* of Srinagar. In a battle near Vikrampur the coalition was defeated by the Mughals. Kedar Rai was captured, and he died subsequently from battle wounds.<sup>79</sup> The *Akbarnama* testifies that during this final battle of Kedar Rai the Portuguese in the service of Kedar Rai also suffered heavy losses. The role of the Portuguese in these battles was already described in the preceding paragraphs. With Kedar Rai dead and the Arakanese in position at Sandwip, Man Raja-kri was now by far the most important lord in Bengal and next to the Mughal general Man Singh a serious contender for supremacy in Bengal. In the light of the coming struggle between the Mughals and the Arakanese it is not correct to say as Eaton does that Raja Man Singh: 'expelled the Arakanese from the lower delta' and met in all his campaigns in Bengal with 'consummate success'.<sup>80</sup>

After the battle of Vikrampur, Man Singh early in 1604 left his base at Bhawal with an eye on facing Man Raja-kri. The Arakanese king had by this time already withdrawn to Arakan.<sup>81</sup> Internal struggles within the Mughal camp following the death of Akbar would obstruct effective Mughal attempts at dominating Bengal politics. In the struggle for the succession of Akbar between his son prince Salim, the future emperor Jahangir, and Salim's son prince Khusrau, Man Singh took sides with Khusrau. After the accession of Salim to the throne as Jahangir (1605-1627) in 1605, the new emperor at first recalled Man Singh to court, then reinstated him, and in 1606 again relieved the Rajput general from his post in Bengal and sent him to Bihar.<sup>82</sup>

In 1606 Jahangir sent his foster brother Qutbuddin Khan Koka to Bengal as the new governor. A year earlier Jahangir had sent one of his famous soldiers, Sher Afgan<sup>83</sup> – the Tiger Slayer – , to Bengal as *jagirdar* of Bardwan (Bardhaman). In 1607 Sher Afgan killed Qutbuddin Khan Koka after the governor had tried to arrest him on suspicions of treason.<sup>84</sup> Qutbuddin Khan Koka was succeeded by Jahangir Quli Khan (1607-1608) who died within a

<sup>78</sup> The name of the 'tribe' as the Mughals called the Arakanese in the *Akbarnama* is spelled different in various mss. The places where the first Arakanese-Mughal battles took place are difficult to identify as well. The identification of the account in the *Akbarnama* with the start of the Mughal-Arakanese conflict is however supported by the proximity of Arakanese forces at the time because of their campaigns in the lower reaches of the Bengal delta. Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:1231 n. 4-6.

<sup>79</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 214-215, Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:1235-1236.

<sup>80</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p. 149.

<sup>81</sup> Abul Fazl, *The Akbarnama*, pp. 3:1235-1236

<sup>82</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *The A-in-i Akbari*, H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett trans. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. 3 vols. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1977-1978), p. 1:363.

<sup>83</sup> See also D.H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of a Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 133 n.32.

<sup>84</sup> The story of Sher Afgan's death was later romanticized after Jahangir married Sher Afgan's wife, who became better known as Empress Nur Jahan. Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan. Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 14-30.

year of his appointment.<sup>85</sup> The succession struggle following the death of Akbar thus prevented the Mughals in Bengal from extending their control over the area in the second half of the first decennium of seventeenth century. In the following paragraphs we will return to the development of the relationship between the Arakanese and the Portuguese in Lower Burma and Bengal.

### *3.4 The Portuguese leadership and the Mrauk U court*

For a better understanding of the relation between the Portuguese and their Arakanese overlords we must now take a closer look at the period 1599 to 1615. During this period the relationship between the Arakanese and the Portuguese changed dramatically. In 1603 the Arakanese king Man Raja-kri (1593-1612) started a campaign against the Portuguese communities that had settled in his Bengal and Burma territories. In Bengal Manuel de Mattos and Domingos Carvalho led the Portuguese in occupying the island of Sandwip. And in Burma Filipe de Brito had taken control over the fortress of Thanlyn. With these two take-overs the Portuguese communities had established themselves in local strongholds that would enable them to operate independently in the Arakanese littoral. This, it seems, was unacceptable to the Arakanese and they began a campaign to bring these three leaders back into the Arakanese fold.

The campaign against them can be divided into two phases. The first part of the battle took place between 1602 and 1605. In Burma the confrontations between Filipe de Brito and Man Raja-kri over the fortress of Thanlyn left the Arakanese *uparaja* Man Khamaung a prisoner in the hands of the Portuguese. In Bengal the groups of Manuel de Mattos and Domingos Carvalho were driven off Sandwip, though after the death of Domingos Carvalho the Portuguese regained their old position for a while.

The second part of the campaign started when Man Khamaung had been returned from captivity by Filipe de Brito in 1606. Man Raja-kri now began a relentless crusade against the Portuguese leadership in Bengal. In 1607, in what has been called the Dianga massacre, Man Raja-kri had 600 Portuguese killed, amongst whom were the son of Filipe de Brito, Marcos de Brito and Manuel de Mattos. The ensuing battle with Filipe de Brito ended in a prolonged siege of the fortress of Thanlyn that left neither party as a clear victor. In Bengal the second set of battles are the wars between Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao, who had escaped the Dianga massacre, and the new king Man Khamaung (1612-1622). At the end of these wars the Portuguese community was left without a clear power base. The relationship between the Arakanese and their former allies had undergone considerable change by the

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<sup>85</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 234-246.



middle of the seventeenth century. The Portuguese would go from being allies to enemies and finally at best mercenaries.

At the same time the *Estado da Índia* also faced severe problems with its relationship with its local allies, the *réis vizinhos*. With the arrival of the Dutch and English East India Companies the supremacy of the *Estado* on the high seas was seriously challenged. The Dutch VOC was able to take advantage from the growing discontent amongst Asian rulers with the dominant role of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.<sup>86</sup> In 1608 Arakan would be among the first places the Dutch would visit in the Bay of Bengal as part of their efforts to gain a foothold in Asia. The fact that the Dutch Republic was at war with Portugal and Spain meant that Dutch attempts to enter the Asian trade were usually accompanied by armed engagements with their Portuguese rivals in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>87</sup> The arrival of the VOC would therefore provide new opportunities for the Arakanese kings in their conflicts with the Portuguese.

### *Bengal*

As described above, in 1602 Domingos Carvalho and Manuel de Mattos captured Sandwip from the Mughals who had in their turn taken it from Kedar Rai. Carvalho and De Mattos offered Sandwip to the *Estado da Índia*. As a reward the Portuguese crown created both warlords *fidalgos da Casa Real* and they were given the Habit of Christ.<sup>88</sup> This move of Carvalho and De Mattos seems typical for the way the Portuguese leaders operated in the Bay of Bengal. They worked for local elites, but when they thought they could establish an independent power base they sought the support of the *Estado da Índia* and tried to re-enter the world of the *Estado* by offering Goa revenues and asking for protection in return. King Philip II of Portugal seemed more willing than Philip I to lend a favourable ear to these propositions. The take over of Sandwip was perceived as an act of open rebellion by the Arakanese. Man Raja-kri subsequently took action against the Portuguese leaders. According to Guerreiro, Muslims at the court of Man Raja-kri convinced the king that these Portuguese had become *alevantados* and had raised themselves against the Mrauk U state. This prompted Man Raja-kri to move against Sandwip.<sup>89</sup> As we saw, the Arakanese king tried in vain to conquer Sandwip in 1602. After the 1602 battles a peace was concluded between the

<sup>86</sup> E. van Veen, *Decay or defeat? An inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia, 1580-1645* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2000), pp. 209-225.

<sup>87</sup> Femme S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company. Expansion and Decline*. (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> Letter from Philip II to Dom Martim Affonso de Castro, dated 2 March 1605 in R.A. de Bulhão Pato ed., *Documentos Remittidos da India ou Livros das Monções publicados de ordem da classe de Sciencias Moraes, Politicas e Bellas-Lettras da academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa* 4 vols. (Lisbon, 1880-1893), pp. 1:6,25.

<sup>89</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1:287.

Portuguese leaders and the Arakanese. Man Raja-kri even offered to rebuild a Dominican church that had been destroyed during the fighting.<sup>90</sup>

Apparently not content with the outcome of the battles in 1602, Man Raja-kri launched a second attack on Sandwip on 1 March 1603. This attack left the Portuguese positions so badly damaged that they had to leave the island and flee for the mainland of Bengal. They evacuated to Sripur, Bakla and, Chandecan, where they sought refuge with the *Bhara Bhuiyas*.<sup>91</sup> Domingos Carvalho apparently saw no objection to returning to Sripur, the seat of Kedar Rai, his former employer.<sup>92</sup> Kedar Rai on the other hand could need all the assistance he could get in his battle with the Mughal general Man Singh. Already one month after his arrival in Sripur, on 28 April 1603, he had to fight a battle with a Mughal fleet.<sup>93</sup> This illustrates the interdependence of the interests of these Portuguese *chatins* and their employers.

In 1603 the Arakanese followed their attacks on Sandwip as we have seen with a further campaign against Mughal positions in the heart of Bengal. The irony was that Man Raja-kri had concluded an alliance with Kedar Rai who had in his turn hired Domingos Carvalho to fight the Mughals. In an attempt to escape the wrath of the Arakanese Domingos Carvalho had sought refuge with raja Pratapaditya, one of the *Bhara Bhuiyas* and the king of Chandecan. Raja Pratapaditya thought it however wiser to kill Carvalho as a sign of submission to Man Raja-kri.<sup>94</sup> After this show of strength by Man Raja-kri, and the defeat of Carvalho, at last in 1605 a peace between Manuel Mattos and Man Raja-kri was concluded.<sup>95</sup>

As we saw earlier, in Bengal the arrival of the Mughals and the Arakanese had prompted a coalition of the so-called *Bhara Bhuiyas* to unite their forces against Mughal and Arakanese domination. The *Bhara Bhuiyas* were not one homogeneous group. The different local lords, Afghans, and Portuguese freely and frequently shifted their allegiances to take advantage of the unsettled affairs in Bengal.<sup>96</sup> In this frontier situation the Portuguese tried to cut a share for themselves and in this process they sought assistance from the *Estado da Índia*. The attempts at becoming local lords in Bengal from the Portuguese side were crushed by the Arakanese from 1602. The Augustinian Friar Sebastião Manrique, writing in the 1640s, referred to the 1600-1615 period as the 'unhappy and unlucky war' between the Portuguese *chatins* and the Arakanese. The narrative of this war between the Portuguese and Arakanese

<sup>90</sup> Jossion, *La mission du Bengale Occidental*, p. 1.62; Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 1 :288

<sup>91</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp.2 :132-133; Jossion, *La mission du Bengale Occidental*, pp. 1.61-65.

<sup>92</sup> Jossion, *La mission du Bengale Occidental*, pp. 1:61-65.

<sup>93</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 2:134.

<sup>94</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 2 :135-137; Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 71-73

<sup>95</sup> Jossion, *La mission du Bengale Occidental*, p. 1:64.

<sup>96</sup> Rita Joshi, *The Afghan nobility and the Mughals* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), pp. 18-19, 95-97, 72, 76.

is presented very carefully in his *Itinerario* suggesting that the memory of this war was till fresh and stirred strong sentiments.<sup>97</sup>

### *Lower Burma*

The *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* describes how already in 1603 the king of Arakan asked the king of Toungoo to take action against De Brito, but the attacks on the Portuguese communities in Chittagong and Sandwip were only in 1604 followed by an attack on Portuguese positions in Thanlyn.<sup>98</sup> At the end of the year 1604 a fleet under the leadership of Man Khamaung left Arakan for Lower Burma. At first the Arakanese tried to disguise their intentions and claimed that they intended to use their forces against Martaban and Tenasserim.<sup>99</sup> But on 28 January 1605 Man Khamaung appeared with a force in front of the fortress of Thanlyn. After a long battle the Arakanese forces were left stranded in a narrow channel with no outlet to the sea. Seeing that there was no way out Man Khamaung's army left their boats and went ashore. The final result was that the majority of the Arakanese army defected to Filipe de Brito or to neighbouring Prome and Toungoo. According to some Arakanese chronicles, the campaign also resulted in the capture of Man Khamaung and the other leaders of the Arakanese expedition by Filipe de Brito.<sup>100</sup> Filipe de Brito puts the capture of Man Khamaung in a wholly different perspective as he claimed that he and Man Khamaung were actually on good terms. In connection to this San Shwe Bu has suggested that Man Khamaung rebelled three times against his father. Taken together with De Brito's remarks on their friendship, Man Khamaung's long stay in Thanlyn can of course also be read as an act of rebellion.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Interpreting Manrique's *Itinerario* can be difficult as the author has mixed-up the titles of the kings Man Raja-kri, Man Khamaung and Sirisudhammaraja. Man Raja-kri (1593-1612) is referred to by Manrique as Xalimxa, which could be translated as Selim Shah, the Muslim title of this king. Man Khamaung (1612-1622) is given the title Xalimxa II or Xalamixa II, ie Selim Shah II, which conflicts with all the other available sources where the Muslim title of this king is given as Husein Shah. To add to the confusion Manrique also calls Man Khamaung the son of the 'great Anakporam' ie. the son of the *anauk-bhuran*. As Man Raja-kri's brother was *anauk-bhuran* at the time, this statement of Manrique conflicts with an early statement in the *Itinerario* that Xalimxa II was the son of Xalimxa I, but it could be explained by the fact that Man Khamaung was the second son of Man Raja-kri, which he got by his wife, a daughter of the *anauk-bhuran*. See Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 72 for genealogical information. To make matters more complicated still Sirisudhammaraja (1622-1638) is alternatively given the name Xadamaxa (Sudhamma Shah) and Xadramaxa II. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names' has apparently misread the *Itinerario* and has coupled Xalimxa II or Xalamixa II with Sirisudhammaraja, while in fact Manrique uses Xadramaxa II and Xadamaxa for this king.

<sup>98</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 2:139.

<sup>100</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, p. 2:140; Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:130-134.

<sup>101</sup> Filipe de Brito, 'Relacion del Sitio que El Rey de Arracan y El de Tangu pusieron por Mar y Tierra sobre la Fortaleza de Serion en la India de Portugal el año de 1607', *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa* II, 233-241; San Shwe Bu, 'U Ga Byan, governor of Sindin, Arakan', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 9 (1919), pp. 151-153, see also Maurice Collis, 'An Arakanese poem of the sixteenth century', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 13 (1923), pp. 221-228. Leider has rejected the idea of the rebellious Man Khamaung following the Nga Mi chronicle and because he was not able to trace San Shwe Bu's claims in any other

The ransom Filipe de Brito asked for the release of the Arakanese *uparaja* is significant. As a reward for the release of Man Khamaung, Filipe de Brito asked Man Raja-kri to address him in the future on an equal footing as king.<sup>102</sup> Another result from the release of Man Khamaung was that Man Raja-kri in 1607 restored to Filipe de Brito the territories he formerly held as his *wilayat* in Bengal. Filipe de Brito sent his son Marcos to Mrauk U to settle his affairs in Bengal, but Marcos was killed on his arrival there.<sup>103</sup>

In Thanlyn the last phase of the battle between Man Raja-kri and Filipe de Brito took place in 1607. That year the Arakanese king mobilized a large army and called upon his allies, the rulers of Bhalua<sup>104</sup>, Cukkara<sup>105</sup> and Toungoo to assist him in his war with De Brito. The events of this war are relatively well known because of the extensive reports given by Guerreiro, which were translated by Payne and the description given in Bocarro about the history of the Portuguese settlement in Thanlyn.<sup>106</sup> These are both second hand accounts. First hand accounts of the battle have until now scarcely been used to analyse the events of 1607. There is however a first hand report from Filipe de Brito himself that sheds considerably more light on the case than the others have done. The report written by De Brito, the *Relacion del Sitio que El Rey de Arracan y El de Tangu pusieron por Mar y Tierra sobre la Fortaleza de Serion en la India de Portugal el año de 1607* [Report on the siege of the fort of Thanlyn in Portuguese India conducted by the kings of Arakan and Toungoo on water and on land in the year 1607] was written for king Philip II.<sup>107</sup> A comparison between Guerreiro's *Relação*

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Arakanese chronicle. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 174. As we do not know on which authorities San Shwe Bu based his claims, it remains difficult to assess whether his version of events is credible. The statements made by De Brito seem however to indicate that San Shwe Bu's version of events is correct.

<sup>102</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 144, gives also the amount of the ransom, as does Willemsz., *Peter Floris, his voyage to the East Indies in the Globe*, p. 55; *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, pp. 64-66. The release of Man Khamaung was apparently not free of incidents as Bocarro writes that a parting salute nearly killed the Arakanese *uparaja*, which according to Bocarro made Man Khamaung and De Brito bitter enemies. Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 144

<sup>103</sup> Anon., *Neue Relation. Wie Don Sebastian Gonzales, ein Portugeser. Wider den gewaltigen Indianischen koenig von Arracam, so ein grausamer feind und verfolger der Christen, sigh hafftig getritten, auch von ihm die beruembte Insul Sunidiva erobert hat. Aus einem Portugesischen schreiben, so nechst vergangnen Junio dises 1611. Jars zu Lijsabona aus Indien ankommen, ins Teutsch gebracht* (Augsburg, 1611), p. 3 The *Neue Relation* should be dated to c. October 1610, as the letters from which it is taken arrived in Portugal in June 1611. With an average journey time from Bengal to Portugal of somewhere in between six and eight months this corresponds nicely with the remark of the anonymous author at the end of the text that the northeast monsoon will set in soon (ie. October-November); Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 80; Letter from king Philip II reproduced in the Letter from the *viso-rey* Lourenço de Tavora to the king, dated 29 December 1610 De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, pp. 1:348-349. Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, p. 3:154 attributes the killing of Marcos de Brito to rivalry within the Portuguese community in Arakan.

<sup>104</sup> *Neue Relation*, passim.

<sup>105</sup> Cukkara, or here Chocoria, lies on the Matamuhuri river: see João de Barros (1552) 'up to Cape Negrais are these populated places, Chocoria, Bacala, Arakan city, capital of the kingdom so styled' Hosten thinks that Chocoria could thus be modern Cukkara (Chakiria), halfway between Mrauk U and Chittagong, north of Ramu vide Hosten, 'Jesuit letters from Bengal', p. 61 n.37.

<sup>106</sup> Guerreiro, *Relação anual*, pp. 2:317-329, 3:77-84 translated by C. H. Payne trans and ed., *Jahangir and the Jesuits. From the relations of Father Fernão Guerreiro s.j.* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), pp. 207-240; Bocarro says: 'Do cerco que o rei de Ová poz á nossa fortaleza de Serião, e das causas que houve para se fundar em Pegú por Philippe de Brito de Nicote' in Bocarro, *Decada 13*, pp. 117-164.

<sup>107</sup> The *Relacion del Sitio* was published in *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa* 2 (1962), pp. 233-241.

and this report suggests that the Jesuit author used the *Relacion del Sitio* from De Brito as his primary source, it also shows how Guerreiro has simplified matters and glorified Portuguese military achievements far beyond De Brito's own words. Some striking examples are the letters exchanged between Man Raja-kri and De Brito where Guerreiro greatly embellishes their contents. The battle reports seem totally out of proportion as well when compared to the original report. If we are to believe Guerreiro, the siege mainly consisted of a series of large battles in which enormous Arakanese armies were constantly being defeated by small numbers of brave Portuguese soldiers, De Brito's own accounts present an altogether more realistic picture. Surprisingly the *Relacion del Sitio* has not been analyzed closely by students of Burmese history.

While it is clear that the *Relacion del Sitio* offers only one perspective on the events of 1607, it is to date the only primary source available. To credit the author it must be said that he adopts a far more sober and descriptive vantage point than other Portuguese authors of the time. From the Arakanese side of the story we do not have an account of the battles that took place in 1607.<sup>108</sup> The Arakanese attack on Thanlyn in 1607 could be a result of an earlier conflict in 1605, when Filipe de Brito had allegedly taken Man Khamaung prisoner in Thanlyn, on the other hand De Brito claimed that Portuguese raids on the Arakanese coast were the main motive for the Arakanese king to lay siege to Thanlyn.

The *Relacion del Sitio* provides rare insights in the way the Arakanese conducted their military operations. A central characteristic of the Arakanese way of war was that amphibious operations were at the core of their military campaigns. Naval and land forces operated in close proximity and did not move independently in battle.<sup>109</sup> On the basis of the report of De Brito it is hard to see a technological advantage with the Portuguese in riverain warfare in the shallow-waters of the Irrawaddy delta. It is striking that both Portuguese and Arakanese ships were seemingly capable of firing heavy guns. Both sides protected their ships against enemy fire with strong netting designed to limit the impact of incoming fire.<sup>110</sup> For the Arakanese it was moreover essential to protect their long supply lines, and during the campaign they erected numerous stockades along the banks of the rivers to protect their stores of ammunition and food.<sup>111</sup> For the following description of the siege of Thanlyn in 1607 the

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Filipe de Brito apparently kept on a regular correspondence with king Philip II (king Philip III of Spain) as the latter often refers to letters he received from De Brito in his communications with Goa, see the king's letters in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, pp.1:173-178; 1:317-358.

<sup>108</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>109</sup> I have divided the text of the *Relacion del Sitio* into paragraphs. De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §3-4,8-10.

<sup>110</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §13, 42.

<sup>111</sup> Combined operations in Bengal were carried out along the same lines. Atul Chandra Roy, *A history of Mughal navy and naval warfares* (Calcutta: World Press, 1972), pp. 75-78.

report by De Brito will be used as the main source while other sources will be consulted to check and supplement the information given by De Brito himself.

Somewhere early in 1607 or late 1606 De Brito learned about the preparations made by Man Raja-kri to attack the fort of Thanlyn. In response to this threat he sent his *capitão-mor* Paulo do Rego Pinheiro to scout around Cape Negrais. Do Rego sailed for the Arakanese coast with three *sanguiceis*<sup>112</sup> and seven other ships to raid the coast of Arakan and engage the Arakanese fleet. The purpose of these raids probably was to delay the arrival of the Arakanese in Lower Burma and distract their attention towards Do Rego. Paulo do Rego proceeded along the coast of Arakan on his way plundering and burning several villages. To receive news from what the king of Arakan was doing he ordered three *sanguiceis* together with three of the smaller vessels to land in a place called Caranca, which was close to the first port on a river under Arakanese control. Here they obtained information that Man Raja-kri had been delayed by bad weather and was now in a place called Pontho with his whole armada. At this point Paulo do Rego decided to withdraw to Cape Negrais because of want of ammunition and stores. On receiving this information De Brito sent new supplies to his *capitão-mor* but Do Rego had decided meanwhile to leave at Negrais only two *sanguiceis* and retreat further into the Irrawaddy delta. Shortly after Paulo do Rego had left his men to guard the bar of Negrais they saw the Arakanese fleet arriving which was for them the signal to retreat and report to their captain. The supplies De Brito had sent to his fleet therefore all fell in the hands of the Arakanese at Negrais. The Arakanese fleet arrived in three parts in Negrais, headed respectively by the king, the crown-prince and the lord of Cukkara.<sup>113</sup>

Paolo do Rego subsequently returned to seek battle with the fleet, but the Arakanese declined, and sought refuge under the rocky shores, where the larger Portuguese ships did not dare to venture. The only thing Paulo do Rego could do now was to attack an Arakanese supply fleet which forced the Arakanese to send light vessels to guard their supply vessels and attack the Portuguese. The Portuguese killed the Arakanese *koran-kri*. They also captured a Portuguese fighting for the Arakanese who informed them of the Arakanese plans. Paulo do Rego now returned to Thanlyn and was ordered by De Brito to post the fleet at the point of Dagon. The account of the siege underscores that there were many divisions within the Portuguese communities in the Bay of Bengal. Portuguese soldiers can be seen fighting for both sides. It is also clear that De Brito could count on the support of the ruler of Prome. The

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<sup>112</sup> This is the plural of *Sanguicel* on which see king's letter to Dom Affonso de Castro, AD 1605: 'And seeing that I am informed that ..... the incursions of certain pirates who still infest that coast might be prevented with less apparatus and expense, if we had light vessels which would be more effective than the foists (*fustas*) and galleys (*galés*) of which the fleets have hitherto been composed, seeing how the enemy use their sanguicels, which our ships and galleys cannot overtake, I enjoin and order you to build a quantity of light vessels to be employed in guarding the coast in place of the fleet of galleys and foists.' in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, p 1:26.

<sup>113</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §1-6.

*bayin* of Prome supported the besieged fortress with food, soldiers and military equipment. From the start the Arakanese tried to involve the Toungoo *bayin* in their attempts to remove De Brito from Thanlyn. De Brito on his part tried to do the same. In the end the Toungoo *bayin* threw his support behind the Arakanese.<sup>114</sup>

On 25 March 1607 an advance party of the Arakanese landed on the point of Dagon and began to build stockades and trenches. At the same time they sent ambassadors to the sons of the Toungoo *bayin* at Pegu. With their defences in place the main body of the Arakanese army and fleet moved into Dagon on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The Arakanese were now anchored at both sides of the river with their smaller ships facing their bows to the river and the larger ships anchored mid-stream facing their broadsides towards Thanlyn. In this way the smaller ships, which were equipped with bow cannons could fire across the river, while the larger ships could bring their heavier guns and mortars to bear on the approaching enemy. On land the ships were protected by the trenches and stockades erected by the advance party. The Arakanese also employed large pointed bamboo sticks securely anchored to the riverbed to prevent enemy ships coming too close to shore. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April Paulo do Rego's ship, one of the largest ships in De Brito's fleet, was caught on two of these stakes. His ship subsequently became an easy target for the Arakanese artillery. As the ship of Do Rego carried ammunition for the rest of the fleet it exploded soon after it had been set fire to by the Arakanese, killing Do Rego and his crew. Man Raja-kri hoped that the death of the Portuguese admiral would convince De Brito to surrender, which he did not. The following days the Arakanese slowly approached the river of Thanlyn and made trenches and stockades along the river bank so that their fleet would be able to move closer to the fort under the protection of their defensive works. On 11 April two sons and a brother of the king of Toungoo arrived with 600 horse, 18 elephants and about 16,000 troops to assist the Arakanese.<sup>115</sup> The Arakanese now conquered a high place where the church Nuestra Señora del Monte stood. The following days the Arakanese and the troops from Toungoo tightened the net around Thanlyn forcing De Brito's men back to their citadel. Attacks on the Arakanese supply lines and their headquarters in Dagon by troops from Prome provided some relief. The Arakanese in response cut Thanlyn's supply routes to Prome, making the siege complete.<sup>116</sup> In the weeks that followed the fort was attacked frequently but its defences did not break. Early in May, with the monsoon approaching rapidly the troops from Toungoo left their trenches and started to leave the battlefield.<sup>117</sup> The Arakanese king tried to establish a fort opposite Thanlyn under the command of Man Khamaung to continue the siege during the monsoon. De Brito's troops made a sortie from the fort and were able to destroy the fort while

<sup>114</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §8,23,35-36, 51.

<sup>115</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §23.

<sup>116</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §36-43.

<sup>117</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §45-46.

it was being built. On 9 May after a few days of heavy rain the Arakanese also decided to end the siege and on the 10<sup>th</sup> they sailed downriver.

De Brito estimated that the Arakanese force numbered in total 30,000 men, among whom there were 8,000 arquebusiers. He said there were Afghans, 'Muslims', Muslims from Malabar, Portuguese, Mon and Burmese soldiers in the Arakanese force.<sup>118</sup> The smallest Arakanese galleons, the largest type of ship in the Arakanese fleet, were equipped with 12 pieces of artillery. Although De Brito does not explicitly say so, from his account it seems that the Arakanese ended the siege because of the beginning of the monsoon.<sup>119</sup> It is quite probable that the majority of the soldiers of the besieging armies needed to go home as the ploughing season was about to begin.

In 1608 Man Raja-kri sent a letter to the VOC in which he commented on the reasons for leaving Lower Burma in 1607:

I went to Pegu last year and there I fought against the principal captain, Paulo del Ree. We took three *fusten*, but just as the castle was about to surrender, some *wixins*<sup>120</sup> raised themselves against me, and because the rainy season was about to start I had to retreat. As you are now the same Dutchmen who fought so bravely against the Viso-Rey and you want to spread your name and fame all over India, I ask you to help me take revenge on that rebel Xhenga.<sup>121</sup> When you agree to this I will promise to remain for always the enemy of the Portuguese and to forbid them entrance in my country, and to give you all of Bengal, Arakan and Pegu, or any other place that you might chose to make a city or a *bandel* and to help you as much as I can.<sup>122</sup>

The bearer of the letter, Pieter Willemsz confirmed this in a report of his trading adventures in the East writing that some 'Peguers' had raised themselves against the king, which confirms at least that the sons of the Toungoo *bayin* had broken off the siege as De Brito said, or indeed that they had rebelled against the Arakanese king.<sup>123</sup> It is also possible to connect the

<sup>118</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §48, passim.

<sup>119</sup> De Brito, *Relacion del Sitio*, §47-50.

<sup>120</sup> This term could refer to; *[a]wi shins* or *awa shin*, '[men from] the lord of Ava'. Personal communication from Jacques Leider, 25 December 2007. Alternatively *Wixins* could also be read as *Abixins*.

<sup>121</sup> Filipe de Brito.

<sup>122</sup> NA VOC 4778, n.f., Letter from Man Raja-kri to the Prince of Orange, n.d. [1608] A slightly different version was printed in *Historisch verhaal van het begin, den voortgang en den tegenwoordigen staat des koophandels van de Generale Nederlandsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* 2 vols. (Arnhem, 1768-1772), pp. 1:508.

<sup>123</sup> NA VOC 1055, n.f. Letter from Pieter Willemsz. to Puyck in Aceh, dated Arakan 6 March 1608 and rephrased in NA VOC 1055 n.f. Report on the Bay of Bengal and Arakan by Pieter Willemsz., dated Masulipatnam 25 May 1608 printed as Pieter Willemsz., 'Informatie van de Bochte van Bengala en de Arracan gedaen door Pieter Willemsz. in Masulipatnam desen 25 Maij Anno 1608', J.K.J. de Jonge, *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië* (1595-1610) 16 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1862-1909), pp. 3:287-



hasty retreat of the Arakanese king to a rebellion of Man Khamaung. Earlier in this Chapter it was noted that De Brito claimed they were on good terms with each other and in Arakanese traditions the name of Man Khamaung is connected to three attempted rebellions against his father.<sup>124</sup> Given the account of De Brito this however seems unlikely; At any rate Man Rajakri's attempt to restore his authority in Lower Burma had failed. The following years Filipe de Brito would set out to dominate the local *Banhas* and *Bayins* in Lower Burma.

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<sup>124</sup> San Shwe Bu, 'U Ga Byan, governor of Sindin, Arakan', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 9 (1919), pp. 151-153.



After the siege Filipe de Brito was left with a depleted and weakened force in Thanlyn and he was hit in January 1608 by a great fire which destroyed the fort. Although the citadel of Thanlyn had almost fallen to the Arakanese and a great fire had only left the walls standing, De Brito kept a strong position in Lower Burma. The strength of Filipe de Brito in Lower Burma after 1608 is attributed by Burmese chronicles to the alliance between De Brito and the *Banha Dala*. Although there is no agreement on the exact nature of the relationship, several sources write about a marriage-alliance between the children of the two leaders.<sup>125</sup> Dutch merchants in Siam observed that this *Banha Dala* had earlier been allied to the king of Siam, but that in 1612 he had switched allegiances and allowed De Brito to conquer Martaban and Moulmein. That same year it was reported De Brito was planning to lay siege to Mergui. De Brito apparently planned to build another fortress in Mergui and in doing so he was aiming to complete his stranglehold over Lower Burma and the trade routes to China and Siam. The Dutch merchants at the Ayutthayan court reported that it was feared that if De Brito was not stopped now, he would become too strong for the Arakanese, Burmese or Siamese to stop him. They of course also feared growing Portuguese influence in Lower Burma would harm the VOC's interests in the region.<sup>126</sup> In 1612 the *Banha Dala* and De Brito even attacked Toungoo.<sup>127</sup>

In 1613 the Avan king Anaukpetlun marched his armies en masse on Thanlyn and laid siege to the Portuguese stronghold in the Irrawaddy delta. In April the fort fell to the Burmese after a prolonged siege. De Brito was impaled on a stick, his head cut off and displayed for all to see, while his Portuguese followers were all killed.<sup>128</sup> The downfall of Filipe de Brito in 1613 is attributed by the Burmese chronicles by the end of De Brito's friendship with the *Banha Dala*, when the latter became an ally of Ava with the title of Phyu Dhammaraja and as a consequence Filipe de Brito was left in Thanlyn without local support.<sup>129</sup> Dutch sources confirm that in 1613 the *Banha Dala* submitted to the king of Ava and in doing so also handed Martaban and Moulmein over to the Burmese. In 1613 in a final attempt to restore the

<sup>125</sup> According to Prince Damrong, 'Our Wars with the Burmese', p. 207, The son of De Brito married the daughter of *Banha Dala*, but A.P. Phayre's commentary on the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 64, says De Brito marries his daughter to *Banha Dala's* son (*Banha Nwe*) while the text of the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 78, allows for De Brito's son Simon to be married to the daughter of *Banha Dala*. Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, p. 3:139 finally, lets Simon de Brito marry the daughter of the king of Martaban. As was mentioned earlier this Mon lord was known as the *Banha Dala*.

<sup>126</sup> NA VOC 1054, fol. 40v. Letter from Cornelis van Neyenrode and Maerten Houtman to Heynrick Janssen in Patani, dated Ayutthaya 3 May 1612. In discussing De Brito's conquests on the Tenasserim coast, Van Neyenrode referred to an earlier letter he had received from Janssen in Patani.

<sup>127</sup> *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 68.

<sup>128</sup> NA VOC 1056, fol. 95-96v Letter from Maerten Houtman to Heynrick Janssen in Patani, dated Ayutthaya 18 March 1613, fol. 96v; NA VOC 1056, fol. 97v-99 Letter from Maerten Houtman to Heynrick Janssen in Patani, dated Ayutthaya 24 April 1613, fol. 98v and NA VOC 1056, fol. 57-59 Letter from Abraham van den Broecke to the Amsterdam chamber, dated Patani 12 October 1613, fol. 58v.

<sup>129</sup> Prince Damrong, 'Our Wars with the Burmese', pp. 209-210.

balance of power in Lower Burma Man Khamaung, who had recently succeeded his father, sent three ships to relieve Felipe de Brito, but this succour arrived too late.<sup>130</sup>

Although Filipe de Brito is portrayed in Burmese chronicles like U Kala's chronicle and in the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* as a despoiler of temples and an enemy of the Buddhist religion the *Slapat Ragawan*, a Mon chronicle, records that during his reign in Lower Burma several additions were made to the Shwedagon.<sup>131</sup> Also the find in 1915 by the Archaeological survey of Burma of a stone inscription testifying to the foundation of a stupa in 1608 by the son and daughter of the Arakanese wife of Filipe de Brito point to a somewhat different picture of Filipe de Brito.<sup>132</sup> Would a man noted for his aversion to Buddhism allow his wife and children to build a stupa? The evidence from the Mon chronicle and this archaeological find, together with his own letters and the diplomatic activities suggest that Filipe de Brito aimed to become a *local* lord, and acted accordingly.

### *The 'Dianga massacres'*

The killing of Marcos de Brito in 1607 stood at the beginning of what became known as the 'Dianga massacres'. Manuel de Mattos, the leader of the Portuguese community in East Bengal, was allegedly poisoned by the Arakanese.<sup>133</sup> The same year Man Raja-kri killed and captured some 600 Portuguese in Bengal. In a letter to the VOC, addressed to the *stadhouder* of the Dutch Republic, Prince Maurice of Orange, he explained why:

I have had already for a long time the desire to have you [ie. the VOC] in my country to drive out the Portuguese from my land, but because you are so slow in coming here, I could not delay action against those people who have received so much from me and yet betrayed me so bitterly. So I have killed and captured about 600 Portuguese and I have destroyed all of Bengal, so that at this moment only xhenga<sup>134</sup> is left in Pegu.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>130</sup> J.S. Furnivall, 'The History of Syriam - Syriam ya-zawin', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 5 (1915), p. 52-53.

<sup>131</sup> P.W. Schmidt, *Slapat ragawan datow smim roin. Buch des Ragawan, der Königsgeschichte: die Geschichte der Mon-Könige in Hinterindien nach einem Palmblatt-Manuskript aus dem Mon übersetzt* in Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften Abh. 3 Philosophisch-historische Klasse 151 (Vienna: A. Hoelder, 1906) which differs considerably from the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, p. 64 and Lieberman, *Administrative cycles* passim.

<sup>132</sup> *Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey Burma for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1915* (Rangoon: Government Printing Burma, 1915), pp. 33-34.

<sup>133</sup> The anonymous author of the *Neue Relation* sees a conspiracy whereby Manuel de Mattos was poisoned by the Arakanese but was still given a state funeral attended by Man Raja-kri and his court to quell suspicions regarding his death. *Neue Relation*, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> Filipe de Brito. The text has 'a xhenga' or 'one xhenga'.

<sup>135</sup> Letter from Man Raja-kri to the Prince of Orange, d.d. 1608 in NA VOC 4778 nf. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 80, also speaks of 600 deaths without mentioning his sources, he probably refers to

The Dianga killings left the Portuguese community in East Bengal without its leadership. One of the few Portuguese to escape the killing in Bengal was a salt trader from Dianga named Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao.<sup>136</sup> In the years after the Dianga massacre he would lead the last effort by the Portuguese to recapture their prominent position in Bengal.

Tibao had arrived in Bengal, as so many of the Portuguese adventurers, as a soldier. In the few years that he had been in Asia he had managed to buy himself a small ship with which he engaged in the lucrative salt trade in the Bengal delta. Salt was one of the main products of the island of Sandwip, of which it was said that it could supply the whole of Bengal with that commodity.<sup>137</sup> Tibao was what might be called a typical example of the Portuguese warrior colonists, selling his services as military man to the highest bidder, engaging in trade and operating as a local lord at the same time. After 1607 Tibao together with a large group of Portuguese sought refuge with one of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, the raja of Bakla.<sup>138</sup> From this base in Bakla Tibao and his fellow Portuguese managed to wrest the control over Sandwip from the Afghan warlord Fateh Khan, who held the island as *wilayat* from the Arakanese king. In Bengali history Fateh Khan is known as ruler of Ramu, one of the Arakanese strongholds on the coast south of Chittagong, while in the various Portuguese chronicles he is described as a mercenary formerly in the pay of the Portuguese community in Chittagong.<sup>139</sup> With his take-over of Sandwip the potential danger of a Portuguese controlled Sandwip became a reality for the Mrauk U kings. It now became clear that the need to control Sandwip to protect their interests in Chittagong was very real.

From Sandwip Tibao managed a short-lived but profitable enterprise. He extended his influence to the neighbouring islands of Dakhin Shahbazpur and Patelbanga, which he took from his former ally the ruler of Bakla.<sup>140</sup> Tibao's power in this corner of the Bay reached its zenith when in 1610 he managed to win over the *anauk-bhuran*, Man Nyo a son of Man Rajakri, in his quest for power:

*Dann dises besorgten die arme gefangne Christen, dieweil sie wol wusten, daß ihre erledigung allein an dem gelegen, wann die Insul erhalten wurde, welche der König (wie er sagte) an vilen Orten durchgraben, am Volck erödnen, und gar ins Meer leßen und versencken wolte. Mit disen Briefen schrib Philippus de Britto auch dem*

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Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, p. 3:154.

<sup>136</sup> Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, p. 3:154.

<sup>137</sup> Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 67, citing Du Jarric.

<sup>138</sup> Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:154-157.

<sup>139</sup> The Bengali poet Nasrullah Khan (c. 1560-1625) in his *Jang nama* relates how his father Mansu Khan Khondkar was honoured by king Fateh Khan, king of Ramu. This Fateh Khan is according to Haq the one who controlled Sundiva in 1607. In Bengali histories Gonçalves Tibao is known as *Ganjlis*. M.E. Haq, *Muslim Bengali literature* (Karachi, 1957), pp. 109-140; Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, pp. 3:154-157.

<sup>140</sup> Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia*, p. 3:158. See Luard's notes in Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:394-395.

*Anacaparao (diß ist der Nam deß Königins, deme Ramu und Chocoria eigentlich zugehört) und erinnert ihn, wie daß der König von Arracam sein Vätter (dieweil er sich seiner besorgte) ihn wider alle billichteit vons seinen Landen außgeschlossen, und nur in ein Ed. desselbigen eingetrunen, strich ihme auch andere plagen und unbild, so ihme der König von Arracam gethan heffe, herfür, reiße ihn also an, sich wider den Vatter auffzuwerffen, und daß er mit seiner Macht zum Sebastian Gonzales stossen solte, versprach auch, er wölle ihme selbst Arracam einnehmen, und ihn allda zum König machen helffen. Diser ursachen, unnd daß Sebastian Gonzalves hierzu auch sein hülff anerbote, wurffe diser deß Königs Vetter Anacaparao sich auff.*<sup>141</sup>

The Dutch chief of the VOC in Masulipatnam, Jan van Wesick writing on 15 June 1610 commented on this situation. He reported that an ambassador from the king of Arakan had arrived in Masulipatnam with a letter from Man Raja-kri asking why the Dutch support Pieter Willemsz. promised him in 1608 had not arrived yet. Van Wesick noted that in 1609 the king also sent an ambassador to Goa to ask the *Estado da Índia* for help, and in 1610 he was at war with his brothers<sup>142</sup>. He also reported that the rebels had a large following and were supported by Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao. To make matters worse Man Raja-kri faced at the same time an invasion by the king of Ava, who had refused access to the ruby mines in Upper Burma, presumably meaning that he had closed the passes across the Arakan Yoma.<sup>143</sup>

In the early days of Tibao's leadership he seemed to be on a good footing with Filipe de Brito in Thanlyn, but this soon gave way to mutual distrust. After the 1607 siege, Filipe de Brito needed all the resources he had to stay in power in Lower Burma and he was not able to make good his claim to be the leader of all the Portuguese in this part of the Bay of Bengal. Conflicts with Tibao soon ensued. The conflict between Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao and Filipe de Brito was discussed by king Philip II in a letter to his *viso-rey* Dom Jeronymo de Azevedo dated 15 March 1613. The king ordered that the two should stop their rivalry and work together to secure access to Porto Grande<sup>144</sup>, abide by the peace that was concluded between the *Estado da Índia* and Arakan by de last *viso-rey* Lourenço de Tavora, and fight with the Arakanese against the rise of Mughal power in Bengal.<sup>145</sup> But by the time this order reached Bengal the king's words were years behind the facts happening on the ground.

The Mughal campaign for eastern Bengal by Islam Khan starting in 1608 had unsettled the Bhara Bhuiya coalition and made room for Tibao to expand his rule, as will be

<sup>141</sup> *Neue Relation*, p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> In fact his own sons had risen against him. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 211-214.

<sup>143</sup> Van Wesick mentioned that on no account would the VOC assist Man Raja-kri in a war against this Filipe de Brito. *Missive van Jan van Wesick uijt Mussilipatan van de 15en Junij 1610* {Report from Jan Wesick, dated Masulipatnam 15-6-1610} NA, VOC 1055 n.f.

<sup>144</sup> The Chittagong region.

<sup>145</sup> De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, pp. 2:391-395 and *Neue Relationi*, pp. 10-11.

highlighted in the following pages where we will discuss the ascendancy of Mughal power in Bengal after 1608. In 1615 Tibao even succeeded to win the support of the *Estado* for a military campaign against Arakan. On 14 September 1615 a fleet set sail from Goa to unite with Tibao and attack Mrauk U.<sup>146</sup> This episode that ended in the defeat of Tibao in 1616 will be discussed in the next Chapter.

### 3.5 The Mughal campaigns of Islam Khan in Bengal (1608-1613)

Islam Khan is in Mughal historiography credited with the consolidation of Mughal power in West Bengal and the first substantial victories over the local lords of East Bengal or *Bhati*. For an understanding of the campaigns of Islam Khan and the political geography of Bengal it is necessary that a short description is given of the *Bhara Bhuiyans*. Effective control of the Mughals over Bengal was at this time confined to narrow limits and did not stretch far beyond Rajmahal and a few fortified outposts such as Ghoragat on the right bank of the Karatoya on the south-western border of Kuch-Bihar, Salimnagar at Sherpur Atai in Mymensingh, and Alapsing facing the residence of Khwaja Usman at Bokainagar in Mymensingh. At Dhaka a few *thanahs* were made to protect the city. Bhawal: some 16 miles north-east of the city, Tok, 22 miles north of Bhawal, and Trimohani near Narayanganj 10 miles south-east of Dhaka at the confluence of the Ganges (Padma), Lakhya and the Brahmaputra (Meghna) near Idrakpur.

The local lords of south-eastern Bengal, or *Bhara Bhuiyas*, were organized in a coalition led by Musa Khan, son of Isa Khan who himself was of Afghan descent. The coalition consisted of Afghan warrior colonists and local Hindu chiefs.<sup>147</sup> Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore was the most powerful *zamindar* of the time. He had holdings in Jessore, Khulna and Backerganj and his capital commanded the confluence of the Jumna and Ichamati rivers, known as Dhumgat. Bordering on Pratapaditya's realm was another Hindu *zamindar*, Raja Ramchandra of Bakla. Bhulua (Balwa) was ruled by Lakshman Manikya, who was succeeded by his son Ananta Manikya, who ruled over a large area at present known as Noakhali. The first chief to join the Mughals was the important *zamindar* Raja Satrajit of the strategically important fort at Bhushna who had large possessions in modern Jessore and Faridpur. Raja Raghunath, *zamindar* of Shushang, who covered large parts of the north-eastern border of Mymensingh also joined the Mughals early.

Musa Khan himself inherited from his father a vast territory earlier in this dissertation

<sup>146</sup> Guedes, *Interferencia e Integração*, p. 167.

<sup>147</sup> The following local lords can be identified as forming part of the Bhara Bhuiyas; three *zamindars* between them ruling most of the Pabna area: Mirza Mumin, the son of Masum Khan Kabuki at Chatmohar, Dariya Khan, and Madhu Ray ruling in Khalsi. Binod Ray, *zamindar* of Chandpratap near Manikganj in Dhaka district. In Shahzadapur in the north-east of Pabna ruled Raja Ray. Majlis Qutb ruled Fathabad (Fathapur).; This lists is taken from Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 239.

identified with the area the Mughals called *Bhati*. The lands reigned by Musa Khan comprised about half of Dhaka, large parts of Tripura, and large portions of Mymensingh. The centre of Musa Khan's powerbase was however the strategic region south-east of Dhaka around Trimohani at the confluence of the rivers Ganges, Lakhiya and Brahmaputra. Musa Khan's fort of Khizrpur stood near the confluence of the Dulai and the Lakhiya, opposite the fort stood the family residence of Musa Khan, Katrabo. Opposite modern Narayanganj stood the fort of Qadam Rasul. Three miles east of Khizrpur and nine miles south of Dhaka stood his capital Sonargaon. Another important fort of Musa Khan was Jatrapur at the confluence of the Ganges, the Dhaleswari and the Ichamati. This was a very strategically placed fort because it commanded the water route from Rajmahal to Dhaka. After the death of Kedar Rai in 1603 Musa Khan seems to have taken over his forts at Sripur and Vikrampur. Musa Khan was supported by his cousin Alaul Khan and his brothers Daud Khan, Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan, while his other brother Ilyas Khan had submitted to the Mughals after Musa Khan's first defeat.

The account of Islam Khan's wars in Bengal in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* provides a clear insight into the state of Mughal power in Bengal and the way of war in that province.<sup>148</sup> The beginning of Mirza Nathan's account is quite frank as to the state of Mughal influence in the province when he refers to the words the emperor spoke at the beginning of the campaign: 'At this moment it came out of the truth speaking royal tongue, that the conquest of Bengal had assumed a practical shape'.<sup>149</sup> Apart from the statement at the beginning indicating that Bengal was still to be conquered, the first fact that will strike a reader of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, is the hazardous passage of the Mughal fleet and army from the capital in Rajmahal to the northern frontier town of Ghoraghat. The passage was by no means peaceful and from Nathan's accounts it seems that almost every step along the way had to be fought for.<sup>150</sup> This further confirms our earlier observation that Mughal rule in Bengal was far from secure after Akbar's first conquest at the end of the sixteenth century.

Islam Khan was sent to Bengal on 6 May 1608. Mirza Nathan, the son of the Mughal admiral Ithiman Khan, the *mir bahr* of the Bengal fleet, describes how at the beginning of the campaign a fleet was assembled and tailored to meet the specific needs of the Bengal theatre

<sup>148</sup> Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi. A history of the Mughal wars in Assam, Cooch Behar, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan* by Mirza Nathan, translated by M.I. Borah, 2 vols (Gauhati 1936). The author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Mirza Nathan was the son of the Persian nobleman Ihtiman Khan who was the Mir Bahr, or admiral of the Mughal fleet in Bengal. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp 1:xviii-xx. For a detailed analyses of the Baharistan-i-Ghaybi in the context of Mughal warfare, see Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare* (Routledge: London, 2002) especially pp. 169-179.

<sup>149</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:6.

<sup>150</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:1-44. Even the passage from the Mughal court to Rajmahal was not without its difficulties. Mirza Nathan had to fend off his boats from Gawars or 'unruly people' Ibidem, 1:8.



of war. The first thing Ithiman Khan set out to do after his appointment was to requisition from Kalyan Singh, son of Man Singh, the artillery brought from Bengal in the previous years.<sup>151</sup> The Mughal fleet at its arrival at Rajmahal now consisted of 295 war-boats, of which 70 were designed to carry loads.<sup>152</sup>

The first objective of the Mughal general was to secure strategic forts along the long supply routes from Rajmahal to *Bhati*. During the rainy season of 1608 Islam Khan started negotiations with Raja Pratapaditya who left his son as a hostage with the imperial troops and agreed to meet the expedition later on.<sup>153</sup> After the rainy season of 1608 Islam Khan marched to Alaipur. At Alaipur Islam Khan despatched a force to Raja Satrajit, the ruler of Bhushna. Satrajit, like Pratapaditya, decided to join the imperial army and pledged allegiance to Islam Khan.<sup>154</sup> Islam Khan then received Pratapaditya at Nazirpur and the two agreed that Pratapaditya would send his son Sangramaditya with 400 war-boats to join the imperial fleet under the command of Ithiman Khan. Pratapaditya would join the expedition at Sripur and Vikrampur to assist in the battle against Musa Khan. As a reward he would receive the revenue from Sripur and Vikrampur as his allowance and he was further more confirmed in his own possessions.<sup>155</sup>

The campaigning season of 1608/9 was largely spent on securing the road to Ghoraghat, the next stop on the way to eastern Bengal. Islam Khan had distributed lands at strategic places along the routes between West and East Bengal amongst his officers as *jagirs*.<sup>156</sup> He now left it to them to bring these areas under control.<sup>157</sup> The negotiations with large local *zamindars* and the campaigns for the *jagirs* were all part of the plan to secure the waterways and roads to *Bhati*, to maintain communication with the Mughal headquarters in Rajmahal and to protect the rear and the flank of the army, as well as to provide safe bases for encampment during the rainy season.

In October 1609 Islam Khan left Ghoraghat and marched south along the Karatoya to Shahzadpur and from there on to Balia about ten miles southeast of Shahzadpur. Islam Khan needed to take out two forts of strategical importance, the fort at Fathabad and the fort at Jatrapur. The control over these forts was vital before Islam Khan could think of attacking

<sup>151</sup> At Allahabad Ithiman Khan took from Kalyan Singh 330 pieces of small firearms and cannon, as well as some war-boats. In order to complete the collection Ithiman Khan travelled to the seat of the Man Singh family at Rohtas in Bihar, where he left with 85 pieces of large cannon. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:7, 12.

<sup>152</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:15.

<sup>153</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:14.

<sup>154</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:19.

<sup>155</sup> Pratapaditya agreed to bring 500 war-boats, 20,000 infantry and 1,000 *maunds* of gunpowder to the fight with Musa Khan. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:14, 27-29.

<sup>156</sup> Ithiman Khan for example received parganas at Jahanabad, Tamluk and other places in Orissa and Bardwan, as well as Sunabazu, Bhatuariabazu, Kalabari and other places in the east of Bengal and near Ghoraghat. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:12-13.

<sup>157</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:16, 21-22, 29.

Musa Khan's powerbase at Sonargaon. The fort at Jatrapur lay at the confluence of the Ganges with the Ichamati, and the fort of Fathabad was situated on the opposite bank of the Ganges.<sup>158</sup> These forts not only controlled the overland route to Bhushna and western Bengal, but also provided a base from which Musa Khan could patrol the river Ichamati. All this made the control over Jatrapur and Fathabad vital to the success of the Bengal campaign.

From Balia the fleet and the army of Islam Khan moved on south to Trimohana, the confluence of three rivers, probably close to the place labelled Pidar Poer on Van den Broucke's map.<sup>159</sup> The army entrenched itself here in three forts covering all three rivers, with Islam Khan covering the mouth (*mohana*) of Katasgarh. At this point Islam Khan sent a separate force to Dhaka with 20 war-boats, 50 pieces of artillery and 2,000 musketeers to divert Musa Khan's attention to the East.<sup>160</sup> From the *mohana* of Katasgarh Islam Khan slowly made his way to the main branch of the Ganges leading to Jatrapur. The Mughal general ordered his troops to built block-houses on the banks of the river so that the fleet might pass secure down river.

The battle for *Bhati* was now to begin in earnest. Musa Khan, alerted at the progress of the imperial army, summoned his allies to Jatrapur.<sup>161</sup> At the head of a fleet numbering 700 boats they came down the Ichamati and towards the front of the Mughal army, which by then had reached the banks of the Ganges. Musa Khan constructed at Dakchara a fort on the same river bank as the imperial army, hoping in this way to block their advance to Jatrapur. From his new fort at Dakchara Musa Khan launched an attack on the imperial trenches. Despite the fact that the coalition navy outnumbered the Mughal fleet considerably they were unable to dislodge the Mughal army from its trenches on the high banks of the Ganges. After a battle that lasted three days Musa Khan's fleet had to withdraw to Dakchara after having sustained severe losses.

At roughly the same time another Mughal army under the command of Shaikh Habibullah was heading for Fathabad, which was in the hands of Majlis Qutb. The latter wrote to Musa Khan for assistance, who sent him 200 war-boats under the command of Mirza Mumin. Mirza Mumin at night sailed past the trenches of Islam Khan's army and proceeded to the other side of the river to relieve the besieged fort at Fathabad. The army of Habibullah now found itself in turn under siege. But with the assistance of Raja Satrajit of Bhushna the

<sup>158</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:55.

<sup>159</sup> Pidar Poer is situated just north of the entrance to the Ichamati river. From the narrative of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* it seems likely that this is the place meant by Mirza Nathan. See Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:53-60 where he describes the unsuccessful attempts of Islam Khan to enter the Ichamati and the inconclusive discussion in the notes on the exact geography of the battle Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 2:811 n.4-7. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 253-254.

<sup>160</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:54.

<sup>161</sup> The allies of Musa Khan on this expedition included; Alaul Khan, a cousin of Musa Khan, Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan, younger brothers of Musa Khan, Bhadur Ghazi, Suna Ghazi, Anwar Ghazi, Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul, Mirza Mumin, Madhava Raj, *zamindar* of Khalsi, Binud Raj, *zamindar* of Chandpratap, Pahlawam, *zamindar* of Matang, and Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:55-57.

attack on Habibullah's trenches was repulsed. Mirza Mumin was forced to retreat and his fleet sustained heavy losses when he had to pass again by Islam Khan's trenches on his way back to Dakchara or Jatrapur.<sup>162</sup>

At this point, around June 1610, it seemed that the two opposing armies held each other in a stalemate. Islam Khan decided to bypass the fort of Dakchara and proceed with a small part of his army to the bank of the Ichamati, while the main body of his army kept Musa Khan occupied in a feigned attack on Dakchara. Islam Khan crossed the Ichamati with his elephants and 20 boats he had earlier recalled from Dhaka. Musa Khan was taken by surprise and his boats arrived too late at the Ichamati to stop Islam Khan's troops from crossing the river. The fort of Jatrapur apparently fell easily in the hands of the Mughal army, which now could march overland to besiege its ramparts. With Jatrapur in Mughal hands a large number of Musa Khan's followers fled to Fathabad on the other side of the Ganges.

Dakchara was taken about a month later, after Mirza Nathan with his engineers had reopened a silted up branch of the river, taking the imperial fleet right to the gates of the fort.<sup>163</sup> In July 1610 Islam Khan had won the first major battle for *Bhati*. He now had cut off Fathabad from eastern Bengal, and besieged this strategically important fort from Bhushna. And with Jatrapur in Mughal hands he had strengthened his position in the Dhaka area. All was now ready for the attack on Musa Khan's strongholds east of Dhaka. The defection of one of Musa Khan's brothers to the imperial side was another sign that the coalition was beginning to break down.

After his defeat in July 1610 Musa Khan had made the river Lakhiya his last line of defence. Abdullah Khan, a brother of Musa Khan, guarded the fort at Qadam Rasul, Daud Khan was posted at Katrabo, the family residence north of Qadam Rasul. On the Mughal side Mirza Nathan was entrusted with the building of several forts on the right bank of the Lakhiya. The first fort he constructed was at Khizrpur, opposite Qadam Rasul and Katrabo. The fort provided shelter for the imperial navy and artillery. And so to the north and south of Khizrpur the Mughals built their forts facing Musa Khan's strongholds.

The last phase of the Mughal battle against Musa Khan started on the height of the dry season at the New Year's festival of 1020 A.H., 12 March 1611. Mirza Nathan attacked Katrabo, crossing the Lakhiya under the cover of darkness with a number of small boats and his elephants. The attack so surprised Daud Khan that he fled to Sonargaon. The fort at Qadam Rasul was taken as well following the easy victory at Katrabo. These successive defeats meant that the road to Sonargaon was now wide open for the Mughal cavalry, which crossed some smaller rivers with the aid of floating bridges of small boats which were put in place by Mirza Nathan's engineers. Musa Khan hid himself on Ibrahimpur island, while his

<sup>162</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:59-60.

<sup>163</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:60-70

brother Daud Khan was attacked by a Portuguese fleet. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* does not specify who these Portuguese actually were. It is however quite plausible that Daud Khan was fighting against Tibao. Tibao, as was discussed above, had around 1609 occupied Sandwip as an autonomous ruler. It is quite probable that the Mughals could have tried to enlist the help of Tibao's fleet in their last battles with Musa Khan, in the following years Tibao would frequently shift his allegiance from the Mughal to the Arakanese side. Daud Khan was eventually killed in a fight with the Portuguese somewhere after July 1611.<sup>164</sup>

Musa Khan made a last attempt to recover his former possessions but his army was prevented from landing by Mirza Nathan. With the defeat of Musa Khan the *Bhara Bhuiya* coalition began to fall apart. First Bahadur Ghazi submitted to the Mughal army. He was followed shortly by Majlis Qutb, who handed over Fathabad. Both men were given their former territories as their *jagir*. The occupation of Fathabad now gave the Mughals a shorter and safe communication line with western Bengal and the ports around Hugli<sup>165</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

The involvement of Portuguese mercenaries in the Arakanese littoral has provided significant material for the study of Arakanese history. The Portuguese chronicles help us to construct a detailed image of the struggle over Chittagong and Lower Burma during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. From 1516, when the first Portuguese arrived in Chittagong until 1616, when their last leader was defeated at Sandwip, the Portuguese played a strong and ever more independent part in the politics of south-eastern Bengal and for a short period of time also in Lower Burma. They were instrumental in establishing Arakanese control over the Karnafuli estuary, and consequently over Chittagong. It has also become apparent that the Portuguese were a very diverse group in which different communities worked for various local rulers. With the death of Filipe de Brito and the destruction of Thanlyn in 1613 the Portuguese lost an important leader and one of their strongest positions in the area. At the same time the rise to power of Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao seriously tested the coherence of the Arakanese state. In the following Chapter we will see how the Arakanese were able to eliminate Tibao.<sup>166</sup>

At the same time the Mughals slowly but steadily expanded their hold on south-eastern Bengal. The campaigns of Islam Khan brought the Mughals to Dhaka. The conquest of Dhaka provided them with a base from where they could control the economic centre of

<sup>164</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:85-86

<sup>165</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:88.

<sup>166</sup> NA VOC 1083, Report of Hendrick Lambrechts from Urittaung, dated 5-12-1623, folia 188-190; VOC 1055, Report of Jan van Wesick 15-6-1610, n.f. and MacLeod *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid in Azië, 1602-1650* 2 vols. (Rijswijk: Blankwaardt & Schoonhoven, 1927), pp. 1:220, 494.

Bengal, *Bhati*. The success of Islam Khan's campaign for *Bhati* was not matched by a comparable westward advance of Arakanese influence beyond the Brahmaputra. Although Man Raja-kri found a trustworthy ally in Raja Ananta Manik of Bhalua<sup>167</sup>, it appears that after the 1608 debacle in Lower Burma he had his hands more than full with rebellions in his own kingdom.

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<sup>167</sup> Ananta Manik was one of the chiefs that followed Man Raja-kri on his campaigns against De Brito. *Neue Relation*, pp. 2-3.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE EXPANSION OF ARAKANESE POWER IN BENGAL (1612-1622)

In June 1610 Jan van Wesick, the Dutch director of the VOC operations on the Coromandel coast, wrote that Man Raja-kri was at war with his brothers, who were supported by the local Portuguese community.<sup>1</sup> The definitive loss of control over Syriam after 1608 and the campaigns of Islam Khan in eastern Bengal may all have been instrumental in bringing about the succession struggle that erupted amongst three sons of Man Raja-kri at the end of his reign. Man Khamaung (1612-1622) would emerge victorious from this conflict and he would wage an almost continuous campaign to expand Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal. At the same time the Mughals would try to oppose the expansion of Arakanese influence in south-eastern Bengal.

#### *4.1 The Arakanese war of succession and the struggle for Bhalua 1610-1617*

At least from 1610 three sons of Man Raja-kri: Man Nyo, Cakrawate and the future Man Khamaung would fight each other in and around Chittagong in a succession struggle for the Arakanese throne that lasted for almost three years.<sup>2</sup> In the previous Chapter it has already been related how after the Dianga massacre of 1607 the Portuguese *chatin* Tibao and a large group of his countrymen had sought refuge with one of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, the Raja of Bakla. Tibao had subsequently occupied Sandwip as an independent lord. In this way Tibao became a powerful leader in this south-eastern corner of Bhati, as Daud Khan experienced in 1611. In 1610 Man Nyo, who controlled Chittagong on behalf of his father as the *anauk bhuran*, had allied himself with Tibao against his father and the *uparaja* Man Khamaung. From the *Neue*

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<sup>1</sup> NA VOC 1055, n.f. Letter from Jan van Wesick in Mussilipatan dated 15 June 1610. Van Wesick got his information from an ambassador of Man Raja-kri who was on the Coromandel coast in 1610. See also De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp.2:342-343 Letter from Jacques l'Hermite to the directors, Bantam 10 November 1610 where he writes: 'Aengaende de saecke van Arrecan wort tegenwoordigh by de coopluijden op de custe liggende van cleynder importantie gehouden, overmits de cleyne proffytten die daer vallen connen ende groote oncosten die de Comp. Vooreerst soude moeten dooen om den Coninck weeder in sijn rijck te bevestighen, dewelck tegenwoordigh gheel in troubel is, gelijk Uwe. By de cotype van den brieff van van Wesick ten deele sal connen sien, als oock bij het resolutie boeck, dat goetgevodnen hebben die saecke vooreerst laeten vaeren, alsoo daer sonder een groote macht nyet sonders en is uytterechten. De plaetse van Bengala soude myns bedunckens vanmeerder importantie syn. Alsoo men langs Porto Pequeno den handel van Lahor en Agra daer den anil [indigo] valt ende gemaect wort soude connen in treyn brengen ende darenboven vallender veel schoone witte lynwaeten, die in Nederlandt ongelijck dienstigher soudensijn als die van Masulipatanam.'

<sup>2</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 211-216. Leider estimates that the rebellion of Man Raja-kri's sons started at the end of 1609 or early 1610. It is not clear if Van Wesick's observation about the rebellion of Man Raja-kri's brothers in 1610 refers to the same events.

*Relation*<sup>3</sup> we learn that he did this apparently with the object of installing himself on the throne of Mrauk U with the help of De Brito and Tibao. Man Nyo, who died on Sandwip after being driven out of Chittagong by Man Khamaung, was succeeded as *anauk bhuran* in 1611 by prince Cakrawate. As the new 'king of the west' Cakrawate in turn sent envoys to Islam Khan promising to keep Tibao away from Mughal forces in Bengal and offering to accept Sandwip as a *jagir*, thereby accepting the Mughal emperor as his lord. The Augustinian monk Manrique however suggests there was a good relationship between Tibao and Cakrawate when he tells the story of a marriage alliance between the two families and the conversion to the Catholic faith of a daughter of Cakrawate.<sup>4</sup>

Cakrawate's planned alliance with the Mughals was prevented by Musa Khan, who was still entrenched in the Brahmaputra delta. Musa Khan prevented Cakrawate's passage to Dhaka and the formal submission of the Arakanese prince to Islam Khan. The rebellion of Cakrawate was however to have a serious effect for the Arakanese during the ensuing struggle for Bhalua.<sup>5</sup>

When after his successes against Musa Khan, Islam Khan sent Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi to occupy Bhalua, Raja Ananta Manik, the ruler of Bhalua, immediately received assistance from Man Raja-kri. The Mughals brought into the field a force of 4,000 cavalry, 3,000 matchlock-men and 50 elephants. Ananta Manik fortified Bhalua and advanced with his army to the Dakatiya canal where he raised a fortress with the object of denying the imperial army to cross the river. This tactic proved successful and Islam Khan was obliged to send several reinforcements to assist Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi. The Mughals however persuaded the chief minister of Ananta Manik to defect to their side. The offers of help to the imperial troops by Cakrawate and Tibao may or may not have had any effect on the battle. The fact remains that the Arakanese hastily retreated without giving battle, which surprised the author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. The Mughal army thus occupied Bhalua without giving battle. Ananta Manik subsequently sought refuge in Arakan with Man Raja-kri. When we look back at the events of the previous year when Man Nyo and Tibao had fought a hard battle for Chittagong with the future Man Khamaung, it is not hard to imagine that with the Arakanese army in Bengal, Cakrawate and Tibao could have staged another rebellion during the king's absence, prompting him to return in haste to his kingdom.

In January 1612 the Arakanese made a first attempt to take control of Bhalua, and they also attacked Sripur.<sup>6</sup> The outcome of this battle is not clear. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims the Arakanese were driven out of the area around Sripur, but Mirza Nathan is silent about the

<sup>3</sup> See for a detailed discussion of the text of the *Neue Relation* the previous Chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p.213.

<sup>5</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1: 86-89. Leider quotes the Arakanese 'old chronicle' as reporting that the *anauk bhuran* had sought an alliance with the rulers of Majjhimadesa, central India – ie. the Mughals. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 211. The attribution of this event to Man Nyo is from Leider.

<sup>6</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp.1:146-147 Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 270.

state of affairs in Bhalua. He does however report that he himself refused to assist the Mughal officers who were overrun by the Arakanese.<sup>7</sup> From an Arakanese perspective, the death of Man Raja-kri in 1612 saw the final stages of the succession war between Man Khamaung and Cakrawate. This internal struggle probably precluded a sustained presence in the area east of the Feni rivers. In Arakan Man Khamaung emerged victorious after his siege of four months to the fort at Chittagong. Cakrawate died before the new king entered the fort.<sup>8</sup> The next year Man Khamaung probably spent on organizing his new government. Little is known about the events taking place that year in Arakan or Bhalua.

#### 4.2 *Man Khamaung*

From a letter to the VOC dating from 1614 it is however clear that the new king Man Khamaung (1612-1622) laid claim to sovereignty of some parts of south-eastern Bengal. In the first paragraph of the letter Man Khamaung introduces himself as follows:

This letter is written by king Sultan Husayn Shah<sup>9</sup> known throughout the world for his strength and fame. I am Emperor of the southern lands, that all know to be the most beautiful lands in the world, and rich with precious stones. This land is the first on which the sun shines, clear and pure as gold, in our tongue known as Hange Sawedijn [Hamsawati], known by the rest of the world as Pegu, king of Aracan and a lot of other cities, duke of the country Denij Awedij [Dhanyawati], Dadawed [Dwarawati?], Beijsalij [Vesali?], Rammapour [Ramu?], Mawathin [Meghawati], Rawathin [Rammawati], Chackanna [Cukkara?], Vettipoura [?], prince of the city and land of Satigan [Chittagong] with all the land belonging to it on the side of Bengal, like Syripoura [Sripur], Bachlebaer [Bakla?], and Kijbrajepour [Khizrpur], and Bakaa [Dhaka?]. I am such a powerful king that I am the chief of all kings of the world, lord of the golden chair and of the white elephant, a lord so valiant that he can conquer the whole world in a short while, lord of the golden umbrella, with a golden palace adorned with precious stones as clear as the stars in heaven, a lord who can rule the whole world.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp.1:147-149.

<sup>8</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 214-216.

<sup>9</sup> The Muslim name for Man Khamaung. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', p. 211.

<sup>10</sup> 'Desen brieff sy alle de werelt kennelyck van een seer machtigen Coninck wiens faem alle de werelt sy bekent, genaempt Sultaen Ho=Chentja Keyser van het landt gelegen aende suyt syde, dat alle de werelt is kenbaer, daer oock geen schoonder in de werelt is, dat alle edelgesteente geeft,[Ende] is de beste dat de sonne beschijnen mach, soo claer ende suyver als goudt, in onse spraecke gent. HangeSawedijn ende bij de geheele werelt Pegu, Coninck van Aracan ende veel ander plaetsen, hertoch vant lant Denij=awedy, Dadawed, Beijsalij, Rammapour Mawathin Rawathin Chackanna, Vettipoura, prins van de stat ende plaetse genaempt Satigan, dat alle de werelt is bekent, met alle het landt daer onder gelegen, aende syde van Bengale, als Syripoura,



[Man Khamaung writing to the Dutch governor-general Pieter Both – 1614]

This letter illustrates which areas were considered to belong to Arakan during the early seventeenth century. According to his letter Arakan covered the area north of Pegu and south of Chittagong. Northwest from Chittagong the kingdom's Bengal domains were situated. Interestingly Mughal notions of Bengal in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century excluded just those areas listed here as part of Arakanese Bengal. For Mughal chroniclers Bengal was formed by the area now more or less covered by West Bengal in India. The south-eastern part of Bengal, today mainly in Bangladesh, was named *Bhati*, and was clearly set apart from what the Mughals considered to belong to Bengal.<sup>11</sup> If we discard the claims to Lower Burma, which had formed only a temporary part of the Arakanese kingdom, the letter from Man Khamaung neatly outlines the boundaries of Arakan and its Bengal dominions.

From 1614 to 1616 Man Khamaung embarked on a series of campaigns to conquer the lower reaches of the Bengal delta, west of the Feni rivers. The first step Man Khamaung took was to enter into an alliance with Tibao. The object of this alliance was to drive the Mughals out of the lower reaches of the delta. Bhalua was the first Mughal stronghold that had to be tackled in this respect. Although it is not clear at exactly what time the first attack on Bhalua did take place we do know that the Arakanese king had chosen an opportune moment to attack. Qasim Khan, the new Mughal governor (1614-1617), had on 6 May 1614 just arrived in Dhaka, and his provincial officers all came from their posts to settle their affairs with the new *subahdar*.<sup>12</sup> This was also true of the *faujdar* of Bhalua, Abdul Wahid, who also came to Dhaka. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the Mughal *faujdar* first received news of the impending attack when he was at Dhaka waiting on Qasim Khan, in which case the Arakanese had made their attack to coincide with the beginning of the monsoon season, at least later than May 1614.<sup>13</sup>

Qasim Khan acted swiftly and had several rivers bridged with cargo boats, so that the army he was collecting could be transported quickly to Bhalua. Abdul Wahid returned to Bhalua and retreated with his retinue to the Dakatia canal fearing he would not be able to withstand the attack by the Arakanese forces. At the Dakatia canal the Arakanese land forces

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*Bachlebaer, wel Kijbrajepour wel Bakaas[s?]. Soo machtigen coninck dat ick het hoofd ben van alle de coninh.[en] der werelt, heer vanden gouden setel, van den witten Oliphant, die soo stoudtmoedich is, dat hy in corten tyt de geheele werelt bedwingen can ende vande gouden sombrero, met het gouden huys, met sulcke edel gesteenten beseth, so claer als de sterren die aenden hemel staen ende die de geheele werelt regeren can*. NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109 Letter from Man Khamaung to Pieter Both, n.d. [1614].

<sup>11</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:270-271; 329.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:329-330.

waited for the arrival of the fleet. Tibao however reneged on his promises to assist Man Khamaung and did not take part in the ensuing battle between the Arakanese and the Mughals.

The Dutch sources, which provide information that can be firmly dated, suggest that Man Khamaung sent his armies to Bhalua in the middle of 1614 and again early in 1615. On 12 May 1614 Andreas Crieck left Pulicat with the yacht *Duiffe* to arrive in Arakan on 9 June 1614.<sup>14</sup> On 1 December 1614 Man Khamaung wrote to Pieter Both that his return from Bengal, where he had been betrayed by Tibao, had coincided with the arrival of the yacht *Duiffe*.<sup>15</sup> The Arakanese king explained that notwithstanding the earlier betrayal he would again seek the alliance of the Portuguese to assist him in his wars with the Mughal the following year.<sup>16</sup> Crieck in his letter to Wemmer van Berchem, the Dutch director on the Coromandel coast, explained how the king had wanted to attack Tibao in November 1614 with assistance of the *Duiffe*. The threat of an alliance with the Dutch had coerced Tibao by December 1614 into offering his assistance to Man Khamaung. At the same time Man Khamaung had given Crieck the income of a piece of land, estimated at 1,000 Tanka a year. Crieck had also been provided with an elephant and a golden betel box and was expected to attend the court every two or three days. In return the king expected VOC assistance and about thirty to forty Dutch soldiers.<sup>17</sup> On 12 February 1615 Crieck reported that Man Khamaung and Tibao were again campaigning together in Bengal. At the end of his letter he wrote that just before he despatched his letters to Coromandel a report reached Mrauk U that Tibao had for the second time betrayed Man Khamaung and had captured the Arakanese fleet. Tibao it was feared would now come down the Arakanese coast and attack the capital.<sup>18</sup>

If we accept this sequence of events, the two first attacks of Man Khamaung reported in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* should be dated to 1614 and 1615. It would also suggest that the events as described by Mirza Nathan for these ‘raids’ cannot be accepted at face value. The author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* himself admits that at the time different accounts of the causes of the Arakanese retreat circulated at the Mughal court.<sup>19</sup>

A reconstruction of the Bhalua campaigns of Man Khamaung would now suggest that Man Khamaung had to abort his attack on eastern Bengal and Bhalua in June 1614 because Tibao had not kept his promises to assist him with his fleet. This would imply that after recapturing Bhalua the Arakanese king decided to return home with his army. The account in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* would support such a view, as it seems unlikely that Qasim Khan

<sup>14</sup> NA VOC, fol. 94 Letter from Crieck, dated 11 December 1614.

<sup>15</sup> NA VOC 1059, fol. 109 Letter from Man Khamaung to Pieter Both 1 December 1614.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Crieck to Van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614.

<sup>18</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:335. Mirza Nathan mentions that Qasim Khan ascribed the victory to his son Shaykh Farid.

would have been able to regroup his forces that were spread all over Bengal, with some already on their way to Assam, to be ready to face the Arakanese at Dakatia. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* in fact provides evidence that Qasim Khan faced several internal rebellions while collecting an army for Bhalua.<sup>20</sup> The description of the first attack of the Arakanese in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* therefore probably describes the events taking place both in 1614 and 1615. This would also explain a Dutch report written shortly after Man Khamaung's return from Bengal in 1614 which clearly states that the Dutch were at that time under the impression that the Arakanese king had recovered Bhalua from the Mughals. Kortenhoef at least reported that Man Khamaung had brought Bhalua under Arakanese control again. On top of this the king himself used 'lord of Bhalua' as one of his titles in his letter to the VOC.<sup>21</sup>

Man Khamaung's return from Bengal in June 1614 coincided with the arrival of the Dutch yacht *Duijfe*<sup>22</sup> from Coromandel. Man Khamaung had wanted to use the yacht immediately to counter Tibao's raids on his territory, but as already four of the original ten Dutchmen aboard had died from sickness, this idea was deemed not feasible.<sup>23</sup> The threat of an Arakanese-Dutch alliance however reportedly persuaded Tibao to re-establish friendly relations with the Arakanese. In December 1614 Tibao sent an important hostage to Chittagong.<sup>24</sup> The account of Bocarro confirms that this hostage was a nephew of Tibao. In the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* on the other hand the identity of the hostage is described as a nephew of the Portuguese admiral Antonio Carvalho, and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims that he was taken hostage rather than given as a security for the comportment of the Portuguese troops of the alliance.<sup>25</sup>

Probably early in 1615 Man Khamaung left Arakan with a force consisting of 80,000 matchlockmen, 10,000 Mon fighting with sword and buckler, and 700 elephants. With this force the Arakanese king marched over land towards Bhalua. The fleet, which was consigned to Tibao, consisted of at least 200 Arakanese boats of the types *ghurabs*, *jelias*, *kusas*, *machwas*<sup>26</sup> with 4,000 men on them. All in all the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* estimated that the

<sup>20</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:330-332.

<sup>21</sup> NA VOC 1059, fol. 107-107v. Sketch of Dianga in Bengal and other places under the government of the Arakanese king (1614).

<sup>22</sup> The *Duijfe* was built in Amsterdam and in service from 1611 to 1617 when it was lost at Surat. The ship was a small yacht or pinnace of 50 tons, approximately 116 feet long, with a crew of approximately 20 and armed with probably 10 cannon. See [www.vocsite.nl](http://www.vocsite.nl) for a database of VOC ships.

<sup>23</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 109 Letter from Man Khamaung; NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Wemmer van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614. Crieck had departed Choromandel 12 May 1614 to arrive 9 June 1614 in Arakan.

<sup>24</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck from Arakan to Wemmer van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614.

<sup>25</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13* 444; Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp 1:334 speaks of the most dear relation of Durmish Carbalu.

<sup>26</sup> 'Gouropes or Ghurab or Ghrab, even qrab, a large boat with c. 16 guns and 60 men towed by 4 kosses or kusah' as described by F.J. van der Heiden and W. Kunst, *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 't oost-indisch jacht ter schelling, onder het landt Bengale;...en voorts in 't velt-leger van den Grooten Mogol, tot in 't koningrijk van Assam landewaerts opgevoert zijn. Beneffens een bondige beschrijving der koningrijken van Arrakan, Bengale,*

Arakanese brought an army of 300,000 in the field. The numbers given for the size of the Arakanese army seem extremely large when compared with the numbers given for Man Rajakri's army during the siege of Thanlyn in 1607, namely 30,000. Andreas Crieck reported that after the departure of the king and his army 'almost everybody had left the country to follow the king to Bengal', which might lend some credibility to the numbers given by Nathan.<sup>27</sup>

In Bengal Man Khamaung marched unopposed through Noakhali. It is quite possible that the revolt of the Tripura king Shyok Mani (1600?-1615?), who had hitherto been a loyal vassal to the Arakanese king, was dealt with during Man Khamaung's 1615 campaign in Bhalua. The Arakanese chronicle by Sandamala mentions a campaign directed at Udaipur in 1615. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* also hints at disturbances in the Tripura area, as Abdul Wahid recalled his son from an expedition to Tripura in order to help him fight off the attack of the Arakanese on his *faujdari*.<sup>28</sup> The expedition to Tripura would also explain the long interval it took the Arakanese to get to Dakatia after the first news of their appearance had arrived at Dhaka. At some point during this campaign the Arakanese confronted the Mughal forces at the Dakatia river. Tibao again betrayed the Arakanese and at this critical juncture he murdered the Arakanese naval commanders and took control over the fleet. Tibao's Portuguese followers brought the news that the Arakanese were left without naval support directly to the Mughal camp. This encouraged the Mughal army to cross the river Dakatia. The Arakanese, who were still waiting for the arrival of their fleet, were so taken by surprise by the advance of the Mughal army across the river that they had to beat a hasty retreat. Following the alarming news of the loss of their fleet, Man Khamaung decided to march for Arakan. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims that the Mughals captured 500 Arakanese soldiers and a large number of elephants, which seems trifling in the light of the total size of the Arakanese forces.<sup>29</sup> Bocarro suspected that the Mughals had paid Tibao to withdraw from the battle.<sup>30</sup> A report dated 1614 from the VOC employee Kortenhoef suggests that Tibao at least had a profitable trade in salt and wood going on with the Mughals in Bengal.<sup>31</sup>

It seems that Tibao had planned his attack on Arakan long beforehand. After the capture of the fleet he immediately put it to use and set sail for the Arakanese coast.<sup>32</sup> The

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*Martavan. Tanassery, &c.* (Amsterdam, 1675) translated into English as M. Glanius trans., *A Relation of an Unfortunate Voyage to the Kingdom of Bengala* (London, 1682) quoted in J.M. Foster, 'Note on Ghargaon, Asam', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 41 (1872), pp. 36-37, 57. Sarkar describes the *ghurab* as a floating battery. Sarkar, 'Assam and the Ahoms in 1660 A.D.', *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* 1 (1915) pp.179-95, 191-192.

<sup>27</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615.

<sup>28</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 218-219; Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1 :332.

<sup>29</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:334-335; NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109 Letter from Man Khamaung 1-12-1614 ; Bocarro, *Decada 13*, pp. 441-444.

<sup>30</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, idem.

<sup>31</sup> NA VOC 1059, fol. 107-107v. Sketch of Dianga in Bengal and other places under the government of the Arakenese king , 1614.

<sup>32</sup> As is confirmed by Guedes, *Interferência e Integração* 163-169.

fortresses of Chittagong, Ramu and at the Mayu river were the first to suffer his attacks.<sup>33</sup> Emboldened by his successful attacks he even sailed into the Kaladan estuary where he burned a large number of foreign merchantmen and the king's yacht, a ship of extraordinary size and remarkable beauty.<sup>34</sup> It seems that Man Khamaung arrived with his land forces at a time when Tibao was still carrying on his depredations in the Kaladan and Mayu river delta's. The treacherous acts of Tibao so enraged the Arakanese king that he impaled Tibao's nephew on a stake at a high place overlooking the Kaladan so that his uncle might see him when he left the river.<sup>35</sup>

The reports from the factors in Arakan had persuaded the Dutch directors on the Coromandel coast that it was now opportune to allow the yacht *Duiffe* to participate in an eventual Portuguese-Arakanese conflict. The commander of the yacht, Jan Gaeff, was instructed not only to discover the trading possibilities in Bengal, but also to harm in everyway he could any Portuguese interests he encountered. Andreas Crieck received similar instructions as to allow the yacht and its 21 men personnel to participate in a possible Arakanese-Portuguese conflict.<sup>36</sup>

The Arakanese king hoped to use the newly arrived VOC employees in the same way as he and his predecessors had so successfully done with generations of Portuguese freebooters. This was no doubt done with the object of enlisting their military skills in his battle against Tibao. In 1615 the Arakanese would finally be able to end Portuguese ambitions to sovereignty in south-eastern Bengal in a series of naval battles on the Kaladan and Sandwip.

#### 4.3 *The demise of Portuguese power in Arakan and the battle of Urittaung 1615*

The last battle of the Portuguese *chatins* in Bengal against Arakanese royal power in 1615 was certainly influenced by the arrival of the Dutch company in Arakan. The VOC was not just a passer by in the naval battles between the Portuguese and the Arakanese. The first contacts between the Dutch and the Arakanese took place in 1608 when the Dutch arrived in Arakan to investigate trading possibilities in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>37</sup> They arrived in Arakan just after Man Raja-kri had returned from his expedition to Lower Burma against Filipe de Brito.

<sup>33</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 443.

<sup>34</sup> This would have taken place after 12 February 1615 when Crieck reported news had just reached Mrauk U of the loss of the fleet in Bengal. <sup>34</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615

<sup>35</sup> Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 443.

<sup>36</sup> NA VOC 1059, fol. 57-47v. Instructions for Jan Gaeff chief merchant on the yacht *Duiffe* with sailing orders for Arakan and Bengal, dated 5 May 1615 and NA VOC 1059, fol. 58-59 Instructions for Andreas Crieck chief merchant at the Arakan factory.

<sup>37</sup> Report from Arakan, dated Arakan 6-4-1608 by Pieter Willemsz. Elbing, see also his report on trade in the Bay of Bengal and Arakan, Masulipatnam 25-5-1608, VOC 1055 n.f.; Another copy VOC 4778 n.f. The latter is printed in De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp. 3:287-291.

The Arakanese king seemed determined to find new allies in his battle with the Portuguese. The king was faced not only with a hostile Portuguese community on his eastern, but also on his western flank. Here Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao was well under way in becoming a potentially bigger embarrassment for the Arakanese king than de Brito already was.<sup>38</sup> Man Raja-kri was well aware of Dutch successes in their battles with the Portuguese and solicited their assistance in his wars with the Portuguese.<sup>39</sup> After the Arakanese king had sent an embassy to the Dutch in Masulipatnam in 1610 to enquire whether any support was still forthcoming, it was decided by the Dutch Company to send Jacob Dirksz. Kortenhoef to Arakan, not with any definite promises towards military cooperation but to inform the Arakanese of the possibilities and limitations of any cooperation. The Dutch certainly ruled out any assistance in the event Man Raja-kri would undertake a third attempt to oust Filipe de Brito from Syriam.<sup>40</sup> Kortenhoef was followed by several other employees, not because the trade with Arakan was extremely profitable, but mainly to keep the Company informed about events in the area and to provide a base for VOC ships cruising for Portuguese prizes.<sup>41</sup> To understand this situation we have to take into consideration that at this moment trade meant also war for the VOC; moreover, it was reckoned that with a few good prizes the Company could more than defray its operating costs in the Bay of Bengal area.<sup>42</sup>

In 1615 a large fleet left Goa to assist Tibao in his conflict with Man Khamaung. The importance of the ensuing naval battles between the Portuguese on the one hand and the Arakanese and the Dutch on the other have hitherto been either misinterpreted or not well understood.<sup>43</sup> Arthur Phayre in his *History of Burma* comments on this event as ‘There happened to be lying there some Dutch vessels, and they joined the Arakanese flotilla to resist the [Portuguese] attack’.<sup>44</sup> Also in G.E. Harvey’s *History of Burma* and in Hall’s *History of*

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem and cf. Hall *A History*, pp. 391-392 and Charney, ‘Crisis and reformation’, pp. 194-198.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Man Raja-kri to the Prince of Orange [1608], three copies in VOC 4778 n.f.; ARA Aanwinsten 490, Extracts from Collection Gijsels no. 495, fol. 43 gives a different translation of what appears to be the same letter. The former was printed in De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp. 3:291-292, while the latter was printed in *Historisch verhaal van het begin, den voortgang en den tegenwoordigen staat des koophandels van de Generale Nederlandsche geocroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* 2 vols. (Arnhem, 1768-1772), p. 1:509.

<sup>40</sup> Report from Jan Wesick, Masulipatnam 15-6-1610 VOC 1055 n.f. and Instruction for Kortenhoef [c. June] 1610 VOC 1055 n.f.

<sup>41</sup> Jan Pietersz. Coen to Hans de Haze 30-11-1617. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 2:296.

<sup>42</sup> *Generale Missive* dated 27-1-1625 in W.Ph. Coolhaas ed., *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* 11 vols. (The Hague, 1960-2004), pp. 1:154-159. For a discussion on the impact of Dutch ‘agression’ on Portuguese shipping see Van Veen, *Decay or defeat?*, pp. 78-81.

<sup>43</sup> The following description of the naval battles between the Portuguese, Arakanese and Dutch is based on N. MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid in Azië 1602-1650* 3 vols. (Rijswijk, 1927), S. Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa 1580-1668* 8 vols. (Lisbon, 1993-1995) and archival material from the VOC archive.

<sup>44</sup> A.P. Phayre, *History of Burma. Including Burma proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim and Arakan. From the earliest time to the end of the first war with British India* 2nd. edition (London, 1967), p. 176.

*Southeast Asia* it has remained an open question just why the Dutch ships had arrived in Arakan at such a critical juncture.<sup>45</sup> The accounts as presented by these authors might lead one to believe that the sudden arrival of the Dutch on the scene came as much as a surprise to the Arakanese as to the Portuguese. There are however important considerations that contradict this view.

It has to be remembered that one of the objectives of the Portuguese expedition was to plunder Mrauk U and to keep the Dutch East India Company out of the coastal waters of Lower Burma. The Portuguese were well aware of the presence of Dutch ships in Arakan and they were cautious about the threat they posed to them. The Portuguese were in fact actively seeking a naval engagement in 1615.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, as we have seen, the Dutch presence in Arakan was not only aimed at commerce but was also meant to help secure access to the trade of the Bay of Bengal, if necessary by using force against their European opponents. The Dutch ships in Arakan had in fact permission to assist the Arakanese in their conflict with the Portuguese.<sup>47</sup> And thirdly, the Arakanese not only expected an attack from Tibao, but they had even requested and obtained Dutch support for an offensive action against Tibao.<sup>48</sup>

The reasons for the *Estado da Índia* to support Tibao seem on the other hand to have also been somewhat personal, for the *viso-rey* Dom Hieronymo de Azevedo hoped to obtain considerable personal gains from the treasury he expected to find in Mrauk U.<sup>49</sup> In any case the *viso-rey* had asked Filipe II to bestow upon Tibao the Habit of Christ in lieu of the service he had rendered the *Estado da Índia* and early in 1615 he received confirmation that the king had bestowed this honour on Tibao.<sup>50</sup>

On 3 October 1615 the Portuguese fleet entered the mouth of the Kaladan river. The fleet consisted of some 20 frigates manned with 700 men.<sup>51</sup> Originally the fleet led by Dom Francisco de Menezes should have united with Gonçalves Tibao's forces before attacking Arakan. At the last moment however the Viso-Rey Dom Jerónimo de Azevedo decided the fleet should not unite with Tibao for the attack on Mrauk U. It seems that the advantages of a surprise attack and the prospect of a large and undivided booty were Dom Jerónimo's main considerations.<sup>52</sup> Manuel Borges Corte-Real headed an abortive reconnoitring-party that was

<sup>45</sup> G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824* (London, 1967), p. 142; Hall, *A History*, pp. 392-393.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from king Filipe II to the *viso-rey* Lourenço de Tavora d.d. 20 February 1610 in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da Índia*, pp 2:317-358; Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, pp. 164-169; Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, p. 5:183.

<sup>47</sup> Instruction for Jan Gaeff, dated Masulipatnam 5 May 1615. NA VOC 1059, fol. 57 and 57v.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Man Khamaung to Pieter Both [1614] NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109; Report from Jan Gaeff NA VOC 1065, fol. 105 and MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, pp.1:215-220.

<sup>49</sup> Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, p. 164.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from the king dated 21 February 1615 in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da Índia*, pp 3:271.

<sup>51</sup> MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, p.218; Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, p. 5:183.

<sup>52</sup> Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, p.5:183-185 and Guedes, *Interferência e integração*, pp. 164-165.

driven off the river by a superior Arakanese force. Francisco de Menezes now waited for nearly two weeks before on 15 October he finally launched a full scale attack.<sup>53</sup> Having left the Arakanese time to prepare for battle the Portuguese commander had lost the element of surprise and was driven off the river by the Arakanese, assisted by the Dutch yacht.<sup>54</sup>

Only after having being defeated did the Portuguese commander decide to set sail to unite with Tibao's forces. The combined fleet of Tibao and De Menezes now planned a second attack on Mrauk U. This attack came on 18 November and took place at Urittaung, when the combined Portuguese forces appeared on the Kaladan river once again. This time the Arakanese were even better prepared. They had constructed six batteries on the eastern bank of the river and in front of these batteries had arranged their ships in a line with their bows facing the river, the whole set-up surrounded by a stockade.<sup>55</sup> The Dutch yacht and the larger Arakanese ships were moored with their broadsides facing the river. After a heavy cannonade from both sides the Arakanese broke the line of the Portuguese and chased them with the tide from the river.<sup>56</sup>

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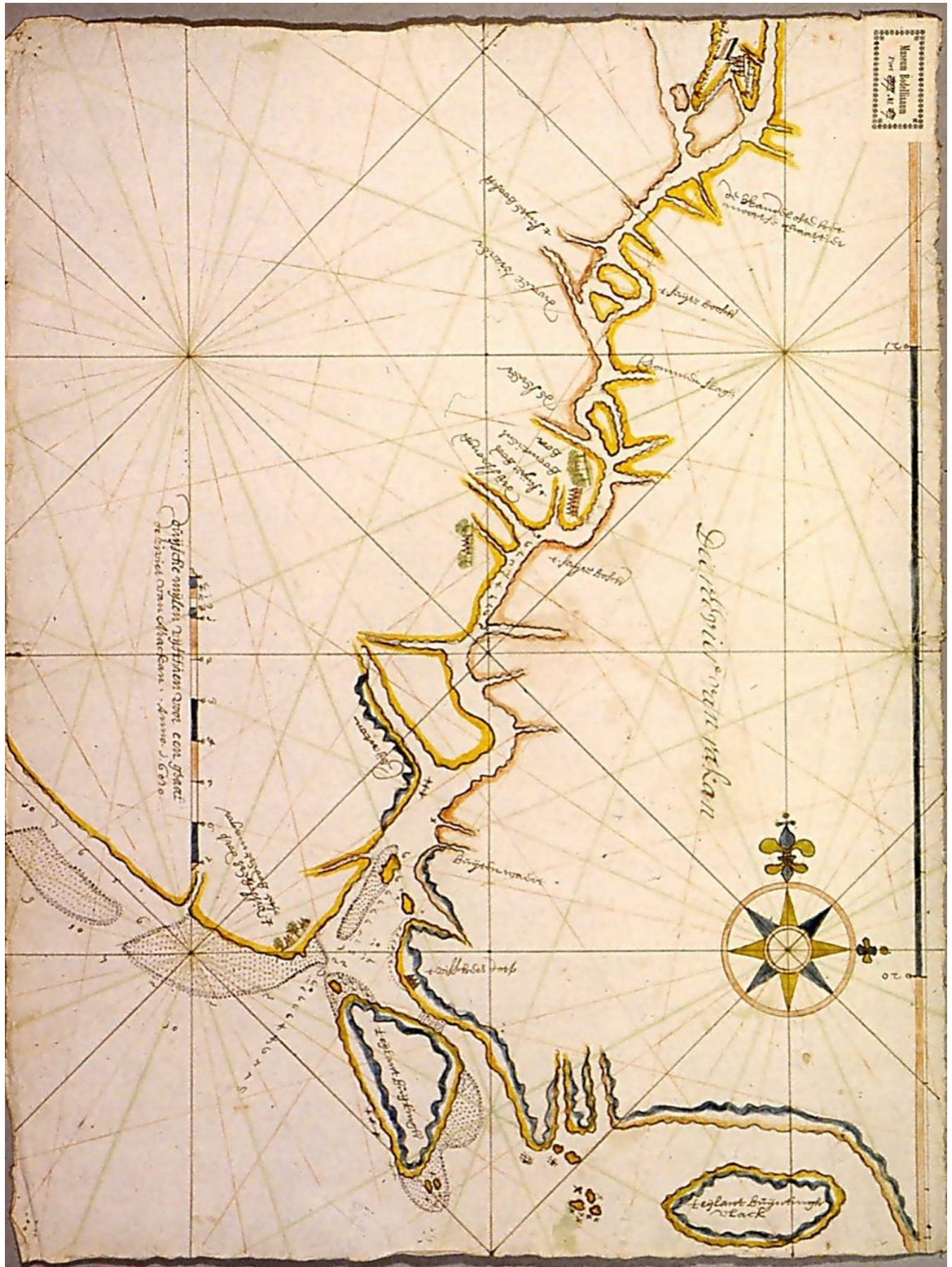
<sup>53</sup> Manuel Borges Corte-Real headed an abortive reconnoitring-party that was driven off the river by a superior Arakanese force Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, p. 165.

<sup>54</sup> The description in Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, pp. 5:183-193 'Perda do Domínio do Mar' gives the most detailed description of these events.

<sup>55</sup> This closely resembles the description of Arakanese tactics in river warfare as discussed in the previous Chapter.

<sup>56</sup> Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, pp. 5:183-193.





[VOC map of the Kaladan river from its mouth to the Dutch factory just below Mrauk U. Urittaung is mentioned as 'Orijonton' and situated on the west bank of the river with three little crosses indicating the reefs in front of the hill on which its famous stupa stands – *Dee reevier van Rakan Anno 1680*. Leiden University Library. Collectie Bodel Nijenhuis COLBN 006-15-013.]

Immediately following this victory Man Khamaung's forces were attacked on the island of Cheduba by the Burmese king Anaukpetlun, this encounter ended in a stand-off and the Burmese were forced to retreat.<sup>57</sup> The attack on Arakan by Anaukpetlun fits in with Burmese military policy after the fall of De Brito in 1613 when the Burmese set out to regain control over Lower Burma. Earlier in 1614 Anaukpetlun had demanded that the Arakanese should return the celebrated white elephant that had been captured after the siege of Pegu in 1599. The refusal to do so may have presented the Burmese *cakravartin* king with a *casus belli*.<sup>58</sup> The failure of the Burmese attack on Arakan allowed Man Khamaung to invite the Dutch to join him in an attack on what was left of Tibao's forces on Sandwip. This attack took place in January 1616. The Allies were once more successful and after a two day battle Tibao was driven off the island and was never heard of again.<sup>59</sup>

The Portuguese that stayed would operate under strong control from Mrauk U. The earlier peace treaties between Goa and Mrauk U dating from the reign of the *Viso-Rey* Aires de Saldanha were followed after the war in 1617 by a general peace between Arakan and Goa. As a result of this treaty the Arakanese king asked for a Catholic priest to be sent to Mrauk U for the 2,300 Christians that still remained in his country.<sup>60</sup> In 1620 the Arakanese finally made a treaty with the *Estado da Índia* in which they promised not to allow the Dutch or English entry in their kingdom.<sup>61</sup> In 1616 the Arakanese had a firm grip on south-eastern Bengal. They controlled the citadel of Chittagong and were masters over Sandwip. This situation would last well into the seventeenth century. Meanwhile the Mughals were gradually expanding their hold over western Bengal in a longstanding war with the local zamindars.

After the eviction of Tibao from Sandwip according to Jan Gaeff Man Khamaung received an embassy from the Mughals.<sup>62</sup> It is not clear what the objective or the outcome of this embassy was. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* does not mention the embassy. The arrival of the

<sup>57</sup>On the basis of U Kala, Charney in 'Crisis and reformation in a maritime kingdom of Southeast Asia', p. 198, mentions a Burmese advance not further than Sandoway.

<sup>58</sup> NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.

<sup>59</sup>MacLeod *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, pp. 1:215-220 and De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, p 4:140. Hall erroneously gave the date as 1617, 'Studies in Dutch relations with Arakan', p. 3.

<sup>60</sup>Josson, *La mission du Bengal Occidental*, p. 68.

<sup>61</sup>E. van Veen, *Decay or Defeat?*, p. 209.

<sup>62</sup> NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff in Masulipatnam to Samuel Kint, dated 27 April 1616.

ambassador did in any case not prevent the Arakanese king to push his troops further into the Bengal delta. Although Man Khamaung had asked for their assistance in his Bengal campaign the Dutch at this point left for Coromandel again. Crieck wrote to his superiors that on 9 January 1616 the yacht *Duiffe* under the command of Jan Gaeff had sailed with the Arakanese fleet from Urittaung to Bengal.<sup>63</sup> Jan Gaeff, after his return from Arakan, described how the king in 1616 had succeeded in ousting Tibao from Sandwip, removing a large part of the island's population to Dianga. Jan Gaeff had returned to Coromandel and had been unable to proceed to Bengal in 1616 because of the onset of the monsoon.<sup>64</sup> Hans de Haze reported in June 1616 from Masulipatnam that the yacht *Duiffe* arrived in Coromandel badly battered by the monsoon with only one rope, but with rubies and gold worth approximately 10,000 Tanka and a Portuguese prize<sup>65</sup> estimated with its cargo at 6,000 Tanka. These were not the profits of trade but the spoils of war. The *Duiffe* returned with her cargo unsold.<sup>66</sup> Because of the incessant warfare in this corner of Bengal trade had come to a complete standstill.<sup>67</sup> The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* provides evidence that Man Khamaung did not stop at Sandwip. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the Arakanese king attacked again after he had 'finished an engagement with a great enemy of his belonging to a tribe called Baharma who lived on the other side of Rakhang'.<sup>68</sup> According to Dutch sources the Avan king had invaded Arakan early in 1616. Jan Gaeff reported on 27 April 1616 that on 10 January 1616 a battle near Cheduba took place between the Arakanese and Avan king.<sup>69</sup> Although the Arakanese chronicles are silent about the war with Ava, U Kala mentions the 1616 invasion of Anaukpetlun.<sup>70</sup> Dutch sources suggest that a state of war between Arakan and Ava had existed from at least 1614.<sup>71</sup> The evidence from the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* combined with the letters from Jan Gaeff suggests that Man Khamaung did indeed proceed from Sandwip to Bhalua

<sup>63</sup> NA VOC 1062, fol. 75. Letter from Andreas Crieck from Arakan to Samuel Kindt at Masulipatnam, dated 9 February 1616 [Missive van Andreas Crieck uijt Arracan aen Samuel Kindt tot Masulipatnam in dato 9 februari 1616].

<sup>64</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 105-105v. Letter from Jan Gaeff on board the ship *Goes* at the Coromandel coast to the Amsterdam chamber, dated 1 June 1617 [Originele missive van Jan Gaeff uijt 't schip *Goes* op de custe van Chormandel aen de camer Amsterdam in dato 1 juni 1617].

<sup>65</sup> NA VOC 11514 nr. 81 Accounts of transactions regarding prizes between the VOC and the Admiralty. The Portuguese ship is recorded to have had on board rice, butter, red yarn, opium, *larijns* (coins).

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Hans de Haze in Masulipatnam to J.P. Coen dated 5 June 1616, printed in *JP Coen bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 2:100-101.

<sup>67</sup> Jan Gaeff reported that the state of war in Bengal had destroyed all the commerce: '*De oorloochoes haen heeft in die quartieren soo geweldigh gecrait dat geen coopman conde vernemen. En tot leetwesen ons cleijn penninck niet kunnen besteden.*' NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint from Masulipatnam d.d. 27-4-1616 and Letter from Hans de Haze in Masulipatnam to J.P. Coen dated 5 June 1616, *Colenbrander, Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 2:100-101

<sup>68</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:383.

<sup>69</sup> NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint from Masulipatnam d.d. 27-4-1616.

<sup>70</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 223

<sup>71</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-95 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan tot the director Wemmer van Berchem dated 11 December 1614 and NA VOC 1062, fol. 37v. Letter from Samuel Kindt from Masulipatnam to the Directors in Rotterdam dated 12 June 1615.

around February 1616. The Mughal governor of Bhalua, Sarhad Khan, abandoned Bhalua without a fight, moved behind the relative security of the Dakatia river and asked Qasim Khan for help. Qasim Khan now constructed with his boats a bridge over the rivers near Khizrpur and sent Abdu'n-N'abi with 2,000 horsemen, 3,000 musketeers, 700 war-boats and 100 elephants to aid Sarhad Khan. Faced with this new force the Arakanese king was forced to return to Arakan, but during his retreat a large part of his army became trapped in a swamp. In the ensuing battle the Arakanese lost about 500 men. Man Khamaung was only allowed to return to Arakan after leaving the soldiers who were trapped in the swamp as war captives in the hands of Sarhad Khan. Mirza Nathan in his account of the events severely censured Sarhad Khan for allowing the Arakanese king to escape.<sup>72</sup> Mughal reports on the 'defeat' of Man Khamaung in Bhalua should be used with caution as we have seen earlier that the account of Nathan is prone to embellishments with regards to Mughal-Arakanese battles. Although throughout the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* Arakanese kings can be seen advancing ever further into Bengal, Mirza Nathan always ends his accounts of Mughal-Arakanese battles by claiming that the rebellious *Maghs* were defeated.<sup>73</sup> In 1615 and 1616 the Arakanese thus confirmed their hold over south-eastern Bengal with the removal of Tibao from Sandwip and the attack on Mughal positions in Bhalua.

#### 4.4 First Mughal invasion of Arakan

Early in 1617 Qasim Khan decided to attack Arakan.<sup>74</sup> The threat the Arakanese posed to Mughal control in Bengal might have been the reason behind this attack, but the motives are not clear. From Dhaka Qasim Khan marched to Khizrpur, where he was joined by several of his officers. The river Lakhiya was crossed at Bandar, and from there the army took several days to reach Bhalua. From Bhalua Abdu'n-N'abi was sent ahead as commander of the vanguard with 5,000 horsemen, 5,000 matchlockmen, 200 elephants, and 1,000 boats. Qasim Khan with the rest of the army followed in the rear and encamped at the river Feni.

From the Feni there are two possible routes to Chittagong. Crossing into Tripura territory one could try to enter the broad plain west of the Chittagong Hills. This plain rises in the west to a final chain of low coastal hills, mostly below 200 meters, that attain a maximum

<sup>72</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:383-387.

<sup>73</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vide in voice Arakan.

<sup>74</sup> J. Sarkar has dated the invasion to 1616. This seems improbable as in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the invasion of Arakan immediately follows the disastrous Assam campaign (1615-1616) and is followed by Qasim Khan's removal as governor of Bengal in 1617. This also rules out 1619 which is given as the date of Abdu'n-N'abi's invasion by Manrique. As Sarkar also dates Min Khamaung's entrapment in the Bhulua swamp to early 1616, which date, as was argued earlier is confirmed by the letters of Jan Gaeff and Burmese sources, it seems probable that the invasion of Arakan should have taken place in 1617 and not in 1616 or 1619. J. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 1 292-298 and Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:383-387, 404-408, and 419-420; Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp.1:146-147; 285.



elevation of 350 meters. west of these hills is a narrow, wet coastal plain with the main road skirting the low hills. It is this road the Mughals chose for their attack on Chittagong.

The Arakanese did not wait for the Mughal army to reach the heavily fortified city of Chittagong. Man Khamaung sent his Ko-ran-kri, with according to Nathan, 100,000 infantry, 1,000 war-boats, and 400 elephants to Kathgar, a village 20 miles north-west of Chittagong near Sitakunda. At Kathgar the Arakanese constructed a new and strong fort. The Kathgar fort commanded the route the Mughal army had to take to get to Chittagong. Man Khamaung himself led an army of, according to Mughal sources: 10,000 horsemen, 300,000 infantry, and innumerable boats and elephants, which were all meant for the protection of Chittagong. The Mughal general Abdu'n-N'abi now moved fast to prevent the Arakanese to complete their defences at Kathgar, and with the objective of making a surprise attack on Chittagong before Man Khamaung could arrive with his army. Sarhad Khan and Shaykh Kamal reached Kathgar first because the *faujdar* of Bhalua apparently had a better knowledge of the roads in Chittagong. Aiming for a quick success they immediately attacked the fortress, which was still under construction. The Mughals were however unable to take the Arakanese fort by surprise and a siege followed. Mughal forces were now separated, with the main body of the army still with Qasim Khan's at the frontier, near the Feni river, and Abdu'n-N'abi at Kathgar. The Arakanese Ko-ran-kri now had a stockade made between the main Mughal camp at the river Feni and the besieged fort at Kathgar. In this way the Arakanese effectively blockaded their besiegers and as a result no food or supplies reached the Mughals at Kathgar. With the approach of the monsoon the Mughals officers at Kathgar feared that they would be trapped in hostile territory during the rains, without any prospects of new supplies. Sarhad Khan and Shaykh Kamal who were in charge of supplying the Mughals at the siege were unable to break through the Arakanese stockades. As a consequence the siege was lifted and the Mughal army took flight and escaped to Bhalua, having to destroy their cannon and powder. The Arakanese had effectively obstructed Mughal logistics and so the first Mughal invasion of Chittagong ended in failure. It seems that the road to Chittagong on the wet coastal plains west of the mountains could not be used by an invading army that did not control the waterways as well. Without maritime superiority supply lines were too vulnerable to enemy attack on this road. The expedition to Chittagong, which reportedly cost the Mughal government 700,000 Rupees, and the earlier failure of the Assam expedition meant the end of Qasim Khan's period as governor of Bengal. In November 1617 the new governor Ibrahim Khan Fath-i Jang took charge at Dhaka.<sup>75</sup>

The new *subahdar* embarked on a reconciliatory policy with regard to the former leaders of the *Bhara Bhuiya* coalition. Ibrahim Khan restored people like Musa Khan and Raja

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<sup>75</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 298.

Pratapaditya to their former possessions and incorporated them into the imperial fold. This policy soon proved successful and Musa Khan for instance provided invaluable assistance in the first major operation of the Khan, the conquest of Tripura in 1618. The conquest of Tripura was probably meant as a first step towards the conquest of Arakan.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.5 Man Khamaung attacks Bhati

In July 1618 the VOC director on the Coromandel coast decided to send out two frigates with 300 men on board from Pulicat to attack Portuguese shipping in the Bay of Bengal. Their sailing orders directed them to the Burmese, Arakanese and Bengal coasts. They were to anchor in the Kaladan to pick up the Dutch merchant Van der Meer from Mrauk U, as the VOC at that moment did not want to continue their presence in Arakan.<sup>77</sup> Van der Meer however was unwilling or unable to leave Arakan, and so in April 1619 two *galjoten*, *Jager* and *Haas*, on 15 April 1619 were sent from Masulipatnam to Arakan with the same orders.<sup>78</sup> The *Jager* arrived in Arakan long before the *Haas*.<sup>79</sup> The Arakanese king asked the captain of the *Jager* to accompany him to Bengal to fight the Mughal. After being paid 1,000 Tanka the ships company consented, but later ran away, this time with Van der Meer on board. They left the merchant Pieter Reijersz. Crook in Arakan. Crook was of course detained by the king, as was the *Haas* when it called into port. The *Haas* was made to take the place of the *Jager* in the king's armada and was reported to be still fighting in the king's service in Bengal in September 1619.<sup>80</sup>

From these sources it is clear that Man Khamaung at least in 1619, and probably also in 1618 continued his campaigns aimed at Bengal perhaps strengthened by the failure of the Mughal expedition to Chittagong in 1617. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* interestingly does not record any conflict with the Arakanese between 1617 and 1619. The absence of comments from Nathan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* about Arakanese inroads in Bengal could be explained by the author's campaigns on the Assam frontier during this period.<sup>81</sup>

In 1620 Man Khamaung appeared with his fleet before the island of Baghchar near

<sup>76</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 300-302

<sup>77</sup> NA VOC 1068, folia 331-336 Missive van Hans de Haze uit Masulipatnam aan Jan Pietersz. Coen, dated 1 July 1618 f. 333. Van der Meer was left behind as VOC representative by Kortenhoef on 17 February 1616 at Dianga. NA VOC 1061, fol. 192.

<sup>78</sup> Also described as *yachts* or *frigates*. These must have been ships drawing little water equipped with oars. NA VOC 1069 452-457 Letter from Hans de Haze to Jan Pietersz. Coen from Masulipatnam, dated 21 June 1619.

<sup>79</sup> The captain of the *Haas* was killed in a fight with natives on the Andaman islands. Letter from Hans de Haze to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 21 June 1619, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:422-423.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Andries Soury to Coen, dated Visagapatam 16 September 1619, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:470.

<sup>81</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 302.

Dhaka apparently with the intention to attack the Mughal capital.<sup>82</sup> As the author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* was at that time near Dhaka this time an account of the confrontation between the Arakanese and the Mughals has survived.

The Arakanese king had brought 700 *ghurabs*, and 4,000 *jaliya* boats into the river Meghna. The attack on Dhaka surprised the Mughals so much that the governor Ibrahim Khan only had 30 boats at his disposal when he heard of the attack. But within a few days the Mughal fleet grew to a force consisting of 5,000 boats. The speedy built-up of the Mughal fleet resulted in a stalemate. The Arakanese as a result probably extended their control over the area southeast of Dhaka while retracing their steps to Arakan. Ibrahim Khan followed them at a distance as far as Bhalua, strengthening the Mughal *thanas* that lay between Dhaka and Bhalua. All the Mughal officers however returned to Dhaka afterwards. The Arakanese left a fleet of 2,000 *jaliya* at the frontier which meant that from a Mughal perspective Bhalua was not deemed safe.<sup>83</sup> Man Khamaung had succeeded in extending Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal beyond the areas brought under control by his predecessors.

The Portuguese from Goa meanwhile had tried to establish friendly relations with Arakan. In 1617 Dom João Coutinho sent an embassy to Arakan, which resulted in an Arakanese embassy to Goa in 1619 and a peace accord in 1620. According to Leider, the Arakanese were willing to negotiate with the Portuguese because they were well aware that at the same time Goa conducted negotiations with Ava, prompting Arakanese fears of a Portuguese-Burmese alliance. On the one hand the Portuguese from Goa were desperate for a local ally against the growing power of the Dutch VOC in Asia. On the other hand the events of 1615-1616 had clearly brought home to the Arakanese the threat of Portuguese and Burmese invasions. The Arakanese could use the assistance of the Portuguese to secure their borders with the Mughals. A peace with Goa was perhaps understood by Man Khamaung as an extra means to secure the help of the Portuguese renegades in south-eastern Bengal. Leider has suggested that the 1620 agreement between the Portuguese and Arakan should be seen in the light of the attempted invasion of Arakan by Ibrahim Khan Fath-i Jang in c. March 1621.<sup>84</sup> In 1623 however the VOC reported that the Arakanese still, or again, had to fend off Portuguese from Goa and Cochin with ships blockading the Arakanese coast.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:629-630.

<sup>83</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:630-631.

<sup>84</sup> Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 226-229.

<sup>85</sup> NA VOC 1083.

#### 4.6 Second Mughal invasion of Arakan

The conquest of Tripura had opened another possible road to Chittagong for the Mughal army. In 1621 according to Mirza Nathan Tripura chieftains offered the Mughal governor of Udaipur their help in a second invasion of Chittagong.<sup>86</sup> This time the Mughal forces would try to make their way from the Feni rivers to the broad plain west of the Chittagong Hills. If they could cross the hilly jungles on the Chittagong-Tripura border the road to Chittagong would be open. The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* of Shihab ud-Din Talish describes how the Mughals for over two years carefully prepared the attack. Ibrahim Khan, perhaps with the main reasons of the failure of the last venture into Chittagong in his mind, started stacking provisions for the army in Bhalua. He took charge of the expedition himself and with a force of 2,000 war-boats, 40,000 cavalry and infantry, 1,000 elephants and large equipments of war set out to attack the fortress of Chittagong. Moving into the hilly jungle area on the Chittagong border the Mughals soon had to leave their boats behind and not much later their cavalry could not proceed any further. The huge Mughal army had become stuck in the jungles of the Chittagong hills. Even the elephants could only proceed with great difficulty. The Tripura guides apparently had a different concept of an army marching into battle than their Mughal lords. The Khan had finally to admit defeat without giving battle. Food eventually became scarce and the prices of oil, rice and poppy-seed rose sharply. The army had to return home. Mirza Nathan in the end concluded that this jungly route was 'impassable even for an ant'.<sup>87</sup> Although Mughal supply lines this time did not come under attack from the Arakanese, the logistics of warfare in southeastern Bengal and Chittagong proved to be too difficult a task for Ibrahim Khan to solve.<sup>88</sup> The dense jungles of the Chittagong hills prevented a steady flow of food and other supplies to be brought to the main body of the army. No other Mughal army after 1621 would attempt an invasion of Chittagong via this arduous route.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.7 Man Khamaung attacks Jessore

After this second failed attempt at an invasion of Chittagong by the Mughals the Arakanese attacked Mughal territory as far as Jessore.<sup>90</sup> The Mughal army was subsequently unable to counter Arakanese progress in Bengal effectively. The Arakanese campaign in Bengal was

<sup>86</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 303-304. Manrique dates this invasion of Ibrahim Khan to 1623. This seems improbable as at that time the *subahdar* was busy fighting the rebellious prince Shah Jahan (vide infra) Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:146-147, 285.

<sup>87</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:632-633. Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 166a about sixty years later wrongly assumes that the invasion was a success.

<sup>88</sup> Arakanese chronicles do not even mention this attempted invasion. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 230.

<sup>89</sup> The two routes from Bhalua to Chittagong were also recognized by Manrique. Although Manrique wrongly attributes the land route to Qasim Khan and Abdu'n-N'abi' and the coastal route to Ibrahim Khan. Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:146-147, 285.

<sup>90</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 304-205.



probably aided by the fact that in 1621 Bahadur Khan, the *zamindar* of Hijli, openly revolted against Ibrahim Khan. From the report of Mirza Nathan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* an interesting picture appears with regard to the extent to which the Mughals were able to control the lower reaches of the Ganges delta around Jessore. It was reported that on a daily basis the Arakanese with their Portuguese allies carried out raids and had taken away some 1,500 hundred men and women.<sup>91</sup> In order to reach the rebellious Bahadur Khan and to disperse the Arakanese:

[Ibrahim Khan] proceeded to Jessore. After traversing a large part of the straight route, he took the route by the side of the swamps (*ab-i-shur*), and proceeded under the guidance of experienced *Zamindars*. The *Amirs* and all the other *Mansabdars* followed the Khan Fath-i-jang one after another. But as there were many streams and *nalahs* (canals) on the way, very few men except the Maghs and the Firingis were familiar with that route. Ibrahim Khan, himself, for a period of five days wandered from one stream to another and from one *nalah* to another by losing his way and suffered great trouble. There was neither any inhabited place nor any traffic of merchants. He was put to great distress through dearth of food-stuff. After a great deal of trouble he reached his destination and pitched his camp at a place named Kagraghata, three *kos* off from Jessore towards Hijli... The Amirs who left Jahangirnagar [ie. Dhaka] for Jessore, following the Khan, reached near the Khan after suffering untold miseries... Mirza Nathan also arrived after eight days of the arrival of the Khan.<sup>92</sup>

The Mughals apparently had great difficulties controlling these parts of the delta. They did not know the routes nor were they used to travel around these parts of their dominion. The Arakanese on the other hand are portrayed as masters of the terrain. The description of the Jessore campaign of Man Khamaung therefore suggests that this area was considered by the Arakanese to fall under the control of Mrauk U.

Soon after Ibrahim Khan had quelled the rebellion of Bahadur Khan news reached Dhaka that the Arakanese were at the island of Dakhin Shahbazpur (c. August 1621).<sup>93</sup> This time the Mughals had a fleet of 4,000 to 5,000 armed boats ready stationed in Dhaka. But like a few years before an all out battle between Arakanese forces and the Mughals did not

<sup>91</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p 2: 635.

<sup>92</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:635-636.

<sup>93</sup> Following the narrative in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* this invasion dates from before the revolt of Shah Jahan at the end of 1622. The paragraph immediately following the description of the attack on Dakhin Shahbazpur is situated towards the end of the Ramadan, ie September/October. The attack should therefore be dated as having taken place immediately before September 1621. Leider on the authority of Arakanese sources has 1622. On the basis of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* I would prefer 1621 as the more probable date. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:639-641; Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 304-306 and Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 256.

materialize. According to Nathan the Arakanese hastily withdrew from the river after hearing that Arakan was under attack from the Burmese. Ibrahim Khan left his *bakhshi* with a fleet of 600 war-boats to patrol the Meghna.<sup>94</sup> The Mughals apparently felt unable to attack Arakanese fleets operating, so to speak on, the doorsteps of the imperial headquarters in Dhaka.

### *Conclusion*

Somewhere in 1622 Man Khamaung died under unknown circumstances. Although short, the reign of Man Khamaung, saw several significant victories for the Arakanese. The Arakanese king was able to minimize the influence of the Portuguese in the Arakan-Bengal continuum. During his reign the Portuguese would be reduced from allies to mercenaries in the service of the Mrauk U kingdom. After 1615 Portuguese ambitions to territorial dominion in this part of the Bay of Bengal were squashed.

In the ten years of his reign Man Khamaung had been campaigning in Bengal practically every year. Between 1612 and 1622 there is hardly a year for which we do not have primary evidence of the Arakanese king's continual wars with Mughal, Burmese or Tripura armies. The war with Ava meant that the overland trade with Upper Burma had come to a complete stop. VOC factors in Arakan reported that in 1614 several ships had left Arakan with their merchandise unsold because of the war.<sup>95</sup> Likewise merchants from Bengal had ceased to come to Arakan. In 1616 Jan Gaeff reported that because of the wars he had been unable to spend his money in Arakan or Bengal.<sup>96</sup>

In his offensive Man Khamaung extended Arakanese control towards Hijli and stopped the Mughal advance at Bhalua. At the same time Man Khamaung's reign saw two Mughal attempts to invade Chittagong. Both attacks failed. The first invasion was stopped by Arakanese arms, the second by the failure of Mughal logistics. The Mughals on the other hand managed to hold on to their post at Bhalua. From the middle of Man Khamaung's reign a Mughal *faujdar* would be in charge of the fort at Bhalua. In theory Arakan's border with the Mughal empire would from this period be established at the Feni river. But the events on the ground clearly show that large parts of south-eastern Bengal were contested territory. The Arakanese wielded considerable influence in and around Jessore and Hijli on the western side

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<sup>94</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:639-641. Neither Arakanese nor Burmese sources have been found to corroborate this statement. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 256.

<sup>95</sup> NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck to Wemmer van Berchem in Coromandel, dated Arakan 11 December 1614 and NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.

<sup>96</sup> NA VOC 1061, fol. 171-171v. Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint, dated Bimilipatnam 27 april 1616. *De oorloochshaen heeft in die quartieren soo geweldigh gecrait dat geen coopman conde vernemen en tot leetwesen ons cleijn penniinck niet connen besteden.*

of the Brahmaputra. As a result the Mughals were forced to build a string of forts around Dhaka and Hugli.<sup>97</sup> In years to come Sirisudhammaraja, Man Khamaung's successor, would also prove to be a serious opponent for any Mughal governor in Bengal.

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<sup>97</sup> Atul Chandra Roy, *A history of Mughal navy and naval warfares* (Calcutta: World Press, 1972), pp. 77-78.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MRAUK U AT ITS ZENITH (1622-1638)

The city of *Rosanga* [Arakan], ruled by king Sudharma [Sirisudhammaraja], a very image of virtue, and in prowess, like the morning sun, is renowned in the world. He looks after his subjects as if they were his sons. Five hundred elephants carry on his commands. The entire kingdom is in peace and no one is envious of another. Nobody is in distress and all the people are happy through the grace of the king. One day king Sudharma went on expedition hunting into the forest with his army. Elephants of diverse colours were with him. Coloured flags covered the sky. Thousands and thousands of soldiers and horses, without a limit to their number also followed him. The glory of the king's boat was beyond measure. The boat could cover in one day a journey of ten days. The dazzling boat gave out lustre of lightning. Its pillars were of emerald and the roof was of silver. Its stem with a gold peacock looked wonderful. The king thus reached the forest. The soldiers pitched their respective tents and lived happily in these. Various musical instruments were played. The courtesans sang and danced sweetly. [Daulat Qazi, *Sati Mayna-O-Lora Candrani*.]<sup>1</sup>

The reign of Man Khamaung brought stability to the Arakanese kingdom and enabled the ambitious king to expand Arakanese influence in south-eastern Bengal. Although the circumstances surrounding the death of Man Khamaung in 1622 and the succession by his son Sirisudhammaraja (1622-1638) are not clear there are no indications of a succession struggle. Sirisudhammaraja, who was between 18 and 20 when he ascended the throne, married his half-sister who would become the influential queen Nat Shin May.<sup>2</sup> The rebellion of the future Mughal emperor Shah Jahan against his father Jahangir had on the other hand severe consequences for the already weak position of the Mughals in Bengal. It seems the situation was now the reverse of that a decade ago when Man Khamaung ascended the Arakanese throne after defeating his relatives in a war of succession. The Arakanese were now in a strong position to extend their control over south-eastern Bengal. Sirisudhammaraja would continue to expand Arakanese influence across the Bay of Bengal. In years to come Arakanese fleets would command the deltas of the Ganges and Irrawaddy. The king would actively engage in diplomacy, sending missions to all major powers in the Bay of Bengal, and fitting out his own trading mission at the same time. The reign of Sirisudhammaraja however ended with Mrauk U's power at its zenith, with the mysterious death of the king and a coup d'état by one of his ministers.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ghosal, 'Missing links', p. 258. Sudharma is a sanskritization of the Pali name of king Sirisudhammaraja. Rosanga the Bengali name for Arakan from the Arakanese *Rakhine*.

<sup>2</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p.252

### 5.1 Sirisudhammaraja and Shah Jahan in Bengal

In 1623 the rebellious prince Shah Jahan moved from the Deccan to Orissa and Bengal. The Mughal governor of Bengal Ibrahim Khan remained loyal to Jahangir and died in a battle, trying to prevent the prince to enter Bengal. Sarkar has suggested that Bengal suited Shah Jahan very well as he could hope to forge alliances with local rulers already uneasy with the extension of Mughal authority. Mirza Nathan's account of the prince's activities after his entry in nearby Orissa indeed seems to confirm this. In Cuttak Shah Jahan received Miguel Rodrigues, the Portuguese governor of Hugli and Pipli. On this occasion lavish gifts were exchanged and a new alliance formed. Similarly the defeat of Ibrahim Khan at Rajmahal in April 1624 was hastened by the defection of the imperial fleet commanded by Mir Shams, the Portuguese Manuel Tavares and the son of Musa Khan, Ma'sum Khan. The Portuguese and Ma'sum Khan both represented groups that had a long tradition in resisting the extension of Mughal power in Bengal. Ma'sum Khan obviously was one of the last of the once formidable *Bhara Buyias*. The fleets of the Portuguese and Ma'sum Khan would prove very helpful indeed for Shah Jahan in his later battles with his father's general Mahabat Khan and his brother sultan Parviz. It is also not surprising that immediately following Shah Jahan's arrival in Dhaka in May 1624 an Arakanese embassy arrived to assure the rebellious prince of the sympathy of their king Sirisudhammaraja.<sup>3</sup> According to Nathan the Arakanese king possessed 10,000 war-boats, 1,500 elephants, and one million infantry. The embassy supposedly brought a *peshkash* worth 100,000 Rupees, for which in return Sirisudhammaraja received robes of honour and a *firman* confirming him in his territories.<sup>4</sup> The grant of this *firman* has a certain irony to it. The entry of Shah Jahan into Bengal probably diverted attention from the defence of the borders with Arakan. It is clear that Sirisudhammaraja, despite the meek appearance of his ambassadors before the rebellious prince, in the beginning of his reign continued his father's campaigns into Bengal. Hendrick Lambrechts, a VOC merchant, reported in a letter to his superiors that in 1623 the young king Sirisudhammaraja returned to Arakan with no less than c. 30,000 Bengali slaves. The captives were described as strong and healthy, which the Dutch merchant ascribed to the abundance of rice and other foodstuffs in Arakan.<sup>5</sup> In the same letter he described that the young king on 4 December 1623 paid him a visit aboard the VOC's yacht *Medenblick* at anchor at Urittaung. Sirisudhammaraja explained the Dutch merchant that he was at that moment setting out for a new campaign into Bengal.<sup>6</sup> This puts the friendly reception of the Arakanese ambassadors in Dhaka by Shah Jahan in May 1624 in a different perspective. It now seems that it was

<sup>3</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 305-311; Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:689-694, 711.

<sup>4</sup> Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p.2:711.

<sup>5</sup> NA VOC 1083 Letter from Hendrick Lambrechts from the yacht *Medenblick* at anchor before Urittaung (Arakan) dated 5 December 1623, fol. 188-190.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

probably Shah Jahan who thought to profit most from a friendship with the powerful Arakanese Raja.

After he had stayed one week in Dhaka Shah Jahan continued his campaign for the Mughal crown. Bihar was captured with ease. From Bihar the prince decided to proceed westward and occupy Jaunpur, Benares, Allahabad, and Awadh. From Awadh he planned to march on the capital Agra. His plans were however not successful. By the time he wanted to march on Agra the imperial army had reached the prince. Awadh was soon vacated and Shah Jahan finally met his adversaries in a battle near the river Tons where, at the end of October 1624, he was thoroughly defeated.<sup>7</sup>

The unstable political situation in Bengal as described earlier opened the gates for a series of devastating invasions by the Arakanese. After the 1623 raid, it seems that Sirisudhammaraja in 1624, perhaps after his ambassadors had visited Shah Jahan in Dhaka, raided Bhalua, returning to Arakan with a rich booty.<sup>8</sup> After the defeat of Shah Jahan, Mahabat Khan was installed by Jahangir as *subahdar* of Bengal, who in his turn left his son Khanahzad Khan as governor of Bengal. The extent of the Arakanese incursions after the departure of Shah Jahan is illustrated by a report from Jan van der Burch, a VOC merchant who was in Mrauk U in December 1625. On 5 December 1625 Jan van der Burch described that the king had brought from Bengal 10,000 slaves. According to the Dutch merchant these slaves were the result of last year's campaign when Sirisudhammaraja had conquered Sripur.<sup>9</sup>

Possibly because of the threat of Arakanese invasion the new governor of Bengal Khanahzad Khan did not reside at Dhaka. Khanahzad Khan instead installed Mulla Murshid and Hakim Haidar as governors in Dhaka.<sup>10</sup> Mulla Murshid and Hakim Haidar would be confronted with the full force of the Arakanese when the young king in 1626 marched on Dhaka.<sup>11</sup> The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* describes how during their government Dhaka was sacked by Sirisudhammaraja.<sup>12</sup> The sack of Dhaka would have taken place somewhere early in 1626 as in June 1626 following Mahabat Khan's defection to Shah Jahan, Khanahzad Khan was recalled from Bengal and as a consequence his deputies were recalled from Dhaka as well.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 311-313.

<sup>8</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 312. The VOC bought in c. December 1624 400 slaves in Arakan. These slaves must have been the result of the raid described by Nathan. In 1623 the VOC was not allowed to buy slaves who had been in Arakan for more than a year. NA VOC 1084 Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz from Pulicat to the chamber Amsterdam dated 28 April 1625, fol. 167r and .N. A. VOC 1083 Letter from Hendrick Lambrechts from the yacht Medemblick at anchor before Urittaung (Arakan) dated 5 December 1623, fol. 188-190. For the functioning of the slave trade see Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

<sup>9</sup> NA VOC 1087 Report on Arakan by Jan van der Burch dated 5 December 1625, fol. 170r-172v. The report does not mention the sack of Dhaka. The capture of Sripur is mentioned as the main result.

<sup>10</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 313.

<sup>11</sup> NA VOC 1094, fol. 245v-246r Letter from Marten Ysbrantsz., dated Pulicat 4 June 1626.

<sup>12</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 177b erroneously has 1033 AH (1623 AD) as the end date of Khanahzad Khan's *subahdarship* in Bengal, this must be a mistake as in 1623 Ibrahim Khan was still governor.

<sup>13</sup> NA VOC 1094, fol. 245v-246r. In a letter from Pulicat dated 4 June 1626 Marten IJsbrantsz. reported that the

The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* describes how the Arakanese set fire to the Mughal capital of Bengal, plundered its surroundings, and led the populace away as slaves.<sup>14</sup> Shihab ud-Din Talish mockingly describes that while Mullah Murshid and the Hakim Haidar were busy discussing literature the Arakanese king entered the city which they were supposed to defend.<sup>15</sup>

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king of Arakan claimed a large victory in Bengal this year.

<sup>14</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 155b.

<sup>15</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 177b.



Arakanese *jelias* at sea near Pipili with the Mughal governor on horseback inspecting the city's defences. From Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*.



The recall of Khanahzad Khan was followed by a quick succession of governors which served to further destabilize Bengal. The Dutch governor-general Coen reported that every month new governors arrived ‘who all tried in vain to clean up the mess’.<sup>16</sup> The death of Jahangir in October 1627 had again a negative impact on the Mughal’s capability to rule effectively in Bengal.<sup>17</sup> The sack of Dhaka initiated the collapse of Mughal authority in south-eastern Bengal. The fact that a steady flow of slaves kept the VOC coming back to Arakan suggests that Bengal continued to pay tribute to the Arakanese crown following the sack of Dhaka. In 1628 the Dutch governor-general Pieter De Carpentier (1623-1627) in his final report to the directors in the Netherlands described Sirisudhammaraja as ‘the most warlike king on the coast’. The Arakanese king he explained was the only local ruler who defied Mughal rule and was in fact continually at war with the imperialists. He suggested that the Arakanese kept an army of 500 frigates and approximately 80,000 men ready for their wars in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>18</sup> These observations are confirmed by Manrique who describes how between 1622 and 1629 no Augustinian monks had traveled from Hugli to Dianga because of the incessant warfare in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>19</sup>

In 1629 for example an Arakanese fleet sailed up the river Meghna. The fleet under the command of the Portuguese captain Diogo de Sá plundered villages only a few miles from Dhaka. Manrique described how the crews of the *jelias*:

reaped a rich and plentiful booty. Among this they captured a lovely Mogol lady of rank who was escaping with her daughter and mother-in-law in a covered cart, accompanied by a few men on horseback and some servants.<sup>20</sup>

The invaders managed to leave the vicinity of Dhaka without ever being challenged by the Mughal fleet, which had its base at Dhaka. The Mughal lady captured by the Portuguese later explained to Manrique she had been married to a *Mirza* who held the rank of a commander of two thousand horses. After having been raped by the man who captured her she was forcefully converted and finally married to one of the young Portuguese captains in Dianga. This affair, according to Manrique, sufficiently enraged Shah Jahan to order the destruction of Hugli as the Portuguese from Hugli had strong connections with Portuguese communities in

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Coen dated 9 November 1629. ‘*Alle maenden comender schier nieuwe gouverneurs, die niets trachten als te schrobben en te scheeren*’. Colenbrander, Coen. *Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 5:29.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Pulicat 30 July 1628. ‘*In Bengalen is voor ons niets te doen aangesien dit lant nogh geheel en al in oorlogh staat*’. Colenbrander, Coen. *Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 7:1350-1352.

<sup>18</sup> NA Secrete Casse der Oostindische Compagnie, Archief der Staten Generaal 12581.13 volnummer in inventaris 1254 ‘*Rapport van den gewesenen gouverneur Carpentier van de gelentheijt der saecken in d'Oost Indien ten tijde van sijn afscheijt aen haer hoog mogenden overgelevert den 29 september 1628*’ n.f. headings Arakan and Bengalen.

<sup>19</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:84 quoted in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 251.

<sup>20</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 2:316-312.

Arakan and Chittagong.<sup>21</sup> Although, as will be explained below, there were much more motives behind the removal of the Portuguese from Hugli in 1632, this event aptly illustrates how ineffective Mughal control over south-eastern Bengal was at the beginning of Shah Jahan's reign. The Arakanese more or less controlled eastern Bengal and could claim it as their domain. As a result the Mughals withdrew their capital from Dhaka to Rajmahal in the late 1630s. In Rajmahal they were safe from Arakanese attacks. It is also significant that in 1665 the Portuguese operating under the control of the Arakanese in Chittagong, after they went over to the Mughal side, were able to show complete records of taxes collected from Bengal dating back to c. 1625. These records Talish explained were a comprehensive overview of the division of the income of Bengal, specified on a village by village basis.<sup>22</sup> The existence of these records proves that the Arakanese had been able to control large parts of south-eastern Bengal following the wars of Sirisudhammaraja. Talish interestingly describes the Portuguese as having regarded south-eastern Bengal, or 'the tract from Dhaka to Chittagong', as their *jagir*.<sup>23</sup> It has of course to be remembered that these Portuguese formed part of the Mrauk U kingdom and were in fact employed by the Arakanese kings. The Arakanese were thus able to systematically levy taxes and extract land revenue from their Bengal domains from the middle of the 1620s. This strongly contradicts conventional views of Mughal rule in Bengal that regard the initial establishment of the Mughal capital of Bengal at Dhaka as the start of Mughal control over all of Bengal. Eaton's claim that 'soon after Islam Khan's arrival in Bengal, the Mughals succeeded in annihilating or winning over all major chiefs entrenched in the countryside since the time of the sultans' should therefore be revised.<sup>24</sup> Further on in this Chapter more evidence will be presented to substantiate the idea that Sirisudhammaraja had been able to considerably extent Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal. But first Arakan's relations with Burma will be discussed.

### 5.2 War with Burma

On the Burmese front it appears that the Arakanese, in a loose alliance with the king of Siam,<sup>25</sup> were at war with the Burmese king Anaukpetlun from c. 1610.<sup>26</sup> In January 1616 Man Khamaung had repulsed a Burmese invasion force which had reached as far as Cheduba or Sandoway. In 1617 VOC reports suggested war with Burma was again imminent.<sup>27</sup> In

<sup>21</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 2:316-312. See also Van Veen, *Decay or defeat?*, p.215.

<sup>22</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 152a-152b. See also J. N. Sarkar, 'The Feringi pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 AD', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3.6 (1907), p. 425.

<sup>23</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 107b-108a, 123b, 139a-139b.

<sup>24</sup> See for such a view Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 157 and also pp. 137-138, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 2:236.

<sup>26</sup> As was discussed in the previous Chapter. See also Letters of Hans de Haze to Coen dated 5 June 1617 and 1 September 1617. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 2:236; 2:267.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Hans de Haze to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 1 September 1617. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden*

1621 the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims an attack from the Burmese side necessitated Man Khamaung to withdraw his expeditionary force from the Meghna. Other than this little is known of the Arakanese-Burmese relations during the two decades of the seventeenth century following the loss of Syriam and the death of Filipe de Brito. The 1626 sack of Dhaka and the following breakdown of Mughal authority in Bengal meant the Arakanese could now once more turn their attention to Burma.

The Arakanese historiographer Sandamalalinkaya describes how in December 1626 Sirisudhammaraja ordered the invasion of Thanlyn and Pegu (Hamsawati). The king stayed at Sandoway while his minister the *chan ke kri* Nanda Kyo Than proceeded to Lower Burma. Both Syriam and Pegu were ravaged and looted. U Kala's chronicle is silent about this invasion.<sup>28</sup> The invasion of 1626 marks the start of the revival of Arakanese ambitions in Lower Burma. In 1628 Anaukpetlun was murdered by his son Minreidippa. Minreidippa had had a liaison with one of his father's wives, which had brought the two into conflict. Minreidippa was crowned king, but the parricide was immediately threatened by his uncles who were at the time in Upper Burma. Minreidippa asked Sirisudhammaraja for assistance and eventually for shelter. The request for intervention came at a not so opportune moment.

In 1628 one of the most important noblemen in Arakan, the *Laungkrak ca*, revolted against the king. Laungkrak was a former royal capital and situated close to Mrauk U. A Dutch trading mission arriving in Arakan on 24 July 1628 reported that shortly before their arrival the *Laungkrak ca* had tried to overthrow the king and had attempted to crown himself king.<sup>29</sup> Following the attempted coup d'état a civil war ensued in which a large number of noblemen were killed. It was estimated that of the *Laungkrak ca*'s people three to four thousand had died. The merchants Martinus Lowijzen en Roelof Kan described that also during their stay in Arakan people belonging to the rebellious faction were killed. The king apparently still felt that his position was not secure. The *Laungkrak ca* had escaped the killings and operated in a region outside the control of Sirisudhammaraja. The arrival of the VOC mission aroused suspicion as relations between the VOC and the *Laungkrak ca* had always been extremely friendly. The arrival of Dirk Haps, with four free merchants, with the VOC ship *De Kameel* on 26 August 1628, and the yacht *Haring* on 30 August 1628 lead to more misgivings about Dutch presence in Mrauk U. The VOC servants were not allowed to send messages to the factories on the Coromandel coast for fear they would alert the Mughals

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*omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 7:267. Afraid that this war would not end in 20 years it was decided to discontinue the VOC factory in Arakan. The prediction of the long duration of this war would prove to be not far from the truth.

<sup>28</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 260.

<sup>29</sup> NA VOC 1096 Letter from Martinus Lowijzen and Roeloff Cornelisz. Kan to the governor Marten IJsbrantsz, dated Arakan 21 October 1628, fol. 136-137.

to the state of affairs in Arakan.<sup>30</sup> The revolt of the *Laungkarak ca* thus temporarily prevented Sirisudhammaraja to execute any plans he might have had towards territorial expansion in Lower Burma. Just at the moment the Burmese monarchy was in turmoil, Arakan itself briefly descended into a civil war.

After Sirisudhammaraja reclaimed authority in Arakan, in March 1629 he sent a stern warning to the new Burmese king Thalun (1629-1648). In a letter conveyed by two of his ambassadors Sirisudhammaraja threatened that although he recognized the new king's authority, he would not hesitate to invade Lower Burma again: '*Vous êtes bien intelligent, mon cher; (mais) s'il faut que je marche en personne, je marcherai*'.<sup>31</sup> This letter of Sirisudhammaraja clearly points to his ambition to follow in his grandfather's footsteps and to conquer Lower Burma. VOC sources in fact report already in February 1629 that one of their yachts, the *Jager* which had arrived in Arakan on 21 October 1628, was at that moment being used in an Arakanese campaign against Lower Burma.<sup>32</sup> Thalun reacted, perhaps surprisingly, with great humility to the Arakanese threats. U Kala attributes this meek attitude to the fact that Thalun was not officially crowned when he received the emissaries of the Arakanese king. It seems more likely however that the Arakanese ambassadors formed part of a larger expeditionary force already in Lower Burma, of which the yacht the *Jager* also formed a part. The fact that the Burmese kingdom had just gone through a period of unrest could of course equally have been an important reason to try not to tempt Sirisudhammaraja into invading. Thalun in his letter to Sirisudhammaraja clearly recognized the fact that the Arakanese king was a direct descendant of Man Raja-kri who had in 1599 ravaged Pegu.<sup>33</sup>

The conciliatory attitude of Thalun could however not prevent Sirisudhammaraja from attacking Lower Burma again in 1630. The governor-general of the VOC Jacques Specx reported in his letter to directors in Holland that the attack of the Arakanese king on Pegu had ruined several merchants on the Coromandel coast.<sup>34</sup> It is not without significance that during this attack, or perhaps the earlier invasion in 1626, Sirisudhammaraja took from Pegu a large bronze bell cast by Anaukpetlun. The bell was particularly significant in two ways. It firstly described both in the Burmese and Mon languages, the history of Toungoo rule in Pegu. Anaukpetlun had the bell inscribed with a history starting with the conquests of Bayinnaung

<sup>30</sup> NA VOC 1096, fol. 136-137; Letter from Frans Bruys from Pulicat to Coen, dated 5 December 1628. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1520-1522.

<sup>31</sup> Translation Jacques Leider in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 261.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Frans Bruys from Pulicat to Coen, dated 5 December 1628. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1520-1522 and Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Pulicat 5 February 1629. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1536-1537. IJsbrantsz. hastened to explain to Coen that he had not given permission to assist the Arakanese king in his war against Pegu, but that he on the contrary had ordered the *Jager* to return by December 1628 to the coast of Coromandel.

<sup>33</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup> Probably because their ships or cargoes had been taken by the Arakanese. *Generale Missive* dated 7 March 1631. Coolhaas, *Generale missiven*, p. 1:290.

and ending of course with his own achievements. Secondly the bell was set under a *mandap*, or double roof, for the people to strike whenever they wanted to have their wrongs addressed by the king.<sup>35</sup> The symbolism of the capture of this bell can hardly be underestimated. A powerful symbol of kingship, of the king as protector of his people, and lastly of Toungoo rule in Lower Burma was removed from its shrine and taken to Arakan. The removal of the bronze bell is therefore another indication that Sirisudhammaraja was planning to subdue Lower Burma.

U Kala reports that in August 1630 the Arakanese again sent an embassy to Pegu, which was followed by an embassy from Thalun in October 1630. Apart from the salaries paid to the boatmen carrying Thalun's ambassadors, nothing is known about the discussions carried on between the two kings. The objectives and results of the 1630 invasion of Pegu by Sirisudhammaraja therefore remain unclear.<sup>36</sup> Two years later, in July 1632 another Arakanese embassy arrived at the court of Thalun, who at that time was establishing his authority in Chieng Mai. Thalun in return sent an embassy to Mrauk U in October 1632. Again nothing is known about the purpose of these embassies. Finally early in 1634 a revolt started in Pegu, which led to large groups of Mon refugees arriving in Arakan and Siam. In September 1634 another Arakanese embassy left for the plains of the Irrawaddy, duly followed by a Burmese embassy to Arakan. Leider has described these embassies in detail, but he feels that from the available Burmese texts it is not possible to deduce the political motives behind these diplomatic exchanges.<sup>37</sup> Although the two invasions of Lower Burma in 1626 and 1630 point to a renewed interest of the Arakanese in Lower Burma, the reasons behind the failure to follow up on these successes remains unclear. Perhaps the unstable political situation in Arakan itself prevented Sirisudhammaraja from carrying out his intentions in Lower Burma.

In 1634 Thalun decided to change his residence from Pegu to Ava. The removal of the Restored Toungoo dynasty's capital from the coast to the interior has been subject to intense scholarly debate during the last century. Authors such as Htin Aung, Hall and Harvey viewed the move as a watershed in Burmese history, marking a shift from an outward oriented monarchy to an interior, almost xenophobic perspective, with ultimately negative repercussions for Burma's relations with the nineteenth century British Empire. These authors also explained the removal of the capital to Ava as a result of the Mon revolt in 1634.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ratna Paula and capt. Wroughton, ' Restoration and translation of the inscription on the large Arracan Bell now at Nadrohighat, Zillah Alligarh, described by captain Wroughton in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, december 1837' in *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 7 (1838), pp. 287-297.

<sup>36</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 261-262.

<sup>37</sup> Leider says : *il est impossible d'en déduire une exigence concrète. Si nous ne doutons pas que le destinataire pouvait en tirer à l'époque des conclusions correctes, le lecteur contemporain, en revanche, est mal placé pour apprécier ces échanges d'ambassades et de correspondances.* Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 262.

<sup>38</sup> Jeremias Van Vliet mentions an embassy from Pegu in 1634 asking for the cessation of hostilities between Pegu and Siam and the flight of about 100,000 Mon from Pegu to Siam because of the wars in Lower Burma.

Lieberman has argued that such interpretations are an oversimplification of the motives and rational behind the choice of Ava as the new capital.<sup>39</sup> According to Lieberman Anaukpetlun's and Thalun's commitment to Pegu was always only provisional. Although they remained most of the time in Pegu, they only built temporary palaces there and never constructed a *shwei-nan-daw*, or 'golden palace' in Pegu associated with a Burmese royal city. In diplomatic correspondence and court poetry Ava was always identified as the 'abode of kings'.<sup>40</sup> Apart from the reasons for moving to Ava that perhaps related more to emotional attachments as given above, Lieberman suggests two other motives for the removal of the Burmese capital to Ava. The first reason being the demographic superiority of Upper Burma, and the second the inherent security of a capital further inland. As Lieberman observed, a Burmese force travelling downriver on the Irrawaddy could reach Pegu from Ava two to three times faster than the other way around.<sup>41</sup> As Lieberman argues that the removal of the capital to Ava meant that the central administration of the Restored Toungoo dynasty was settled in a relatively stable environment. The depopulation of Lower Burma and the administrative reforms of Thalun allowed for an easier control of Lower Burma and Burma's overseas commerce.<sup>42</sup>

It is however clear that Lieberman mostly neglected the impact of Arakanese military pressure on Lower Burma. Apart from emotional attachments to Ava, Thalun had himself first crowned at Pegu in an elaborate formal coronation, be it not in a 'golden palace'. The fact that both Anaukpetlun and Thalun, as suggested by Lieberman, never constructed more than a temporary palace in Lower Burma should furthermore be associated with the continual threat of rebellion by the local Mon population and the very real possibility of an Arakanese invasion. The Arakanese invasions of 1626 and 1630 destroyed the city of Pegu twice with the Arakanese removing important symbols of kingship. Pegu always remained vulnerable to attack from the powerful Arakanese fleet, to which the Burmese kings had no real answer. To protect the district Thalun had to create special companies of artillery, musketeers and cavalry and set up a fleet of 51 war boats because Pegu was seen as 'the place most vulnerable to invasion'.<sup>43</sup>

Lieberman's idea about the strategic advantage of Upper Burma in fact aptly supports the thesis that the threat of Arakanese invasion contributed in no small means to the decision to move the Burmese capital from Pegu to Ava. The demographic superiority of Upper

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Chris Baker et.al., *Van Vliet's Siam* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), p.125.

<sup>39</sup> Lieberman, *Burmese administrative cycles*, pp. 58-60; Lieberman, 'The transfer of the Burmese capital from Pegu to Ava', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1980), pp. 64-83.

<sup>40</sup> Lieberman, *Burmese administrative cycles*, p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Wil O. Dijk, *Seventeenth century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680* 2 vols. (PhD thesis: Leiden University, 2004), pp. 1:xiv, 11-15.

<sup>43</sup> Hamsavati sittan of 1802 in Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig, trans. and eds. *Burmese Sit-tàn 1764-1826: records of rural life and administration* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), p. 73

Burma as an argument for the move to Ava is not wholly convincing, as massive deportations from Lower Burma by Anauketlun and Thalun to the North contributed much to the demographic superiority of the Upper Burma. Lieberman indeed described Thalun's resettlement programme as the largest population transfer of the Restored Toungoo period.<sup>44</sup> A king willing to settle in Lower Burma could perhaps with the same policy have affected a reversal in this respect, with the opposite result: demographic superiority of the South. All of this is of course not to say that as Harvey claimed, the move to Ava was the result of the policy of a short-sighted king who did not appreciate the benefits of overseas commerce. The move to Ava therefore seems to have been the result of a fairly complex process in which Arakanese military pressure on Lower Burma will certainly have played a significant role. The move to Ava at least allowed the Restored Toungoo dynasty to develop out of reach of Arakanese armies.

In this paragraph we have seen how the new found self-confidence of the Arakanese king was reflected in diplomatic contacts between Ava and Arakan. These diplomatic missions were part of a larger project of the Sirisudhammaraja to establish relations with rulers around the Bay of Bengal. Embassies were sent between the Dutch in Batavia (Jakarta), the court of Siam at Ayutthaya, the Portuguese in Goa, and the Sultanate of Aceh. This flurry of diplomatic activities coincided with the start of royal trading missions emanating from the Arakanese court to the ports in the Bay of Bengal. In the following paragraphs Arakan's relations with the VOC and Siam will be highlighted.

### 5.3 Sirisudhammaraja and the VOC

On the first of September 1627 an Arakanese embassy arrived in Batavia. The leader of the embassy, a certain Ugga<sup>45</sup>, presented the governor-general Jan Pietersz Coen with some gifts, and a letter from king Sirisudhammaraja. The Arakanese king offered the Dutch his friendship and promised them the possibility to trade in a peaceful environment in Arakan.<sup>46</sup> The king requested rigging for a frigate and some sword blades as a present.<sup>47</sup> It is not difficult to see the similarities between the policy of the Arakanese king Sirisudhammaraja and the Dutch governor-general Coen. Both the VOC and the Arakanese tried to entice

<sup>44</sup> Lieberman, 'The transfer of the Burmese capital', p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> His name, written in the sources as *Ouga*, was first mentioned in a Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz. to Coen, dated Pulicat 24 January 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 7:1221, which is confirmed in a Letter from Martinus Lowijsen and Roeloff Cornelisz. Kan to the governor Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Arakan 21 October 1628, NA VOC 1096, fol. 136-137.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 9 November 1627. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 5:30.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz. to Coen, dated Pulicat 24 January 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 7:1221; Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 14 June 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 5:295.

foreign traders to come and trade in their dominions, so as to increase their own wealth. In June 1628 the ambassadors left with the ship *Edam* for Arakan.<sup>48</sup> The ambassador Ugga sent some of his men onboard the VOC ship *Kameel* destined for Coromandel.<sup>49</sup> In Batavia the Arakanese had noticed that the Dutch settlement was almost stricken by a great famine after rice imports from Mataram had been stopped in the wake of the siege Mataram had laid to the city.<sup>50</sup> The Dutch entertained mixed feelings about the Arakanese presence in Batavia. On the one hand the diplomatic exchanges would provide the much needed rice to feed the city's population; on the other hand the presence of the ambassadors would impress on the Arakanese the crucial role of Arakanese rice for the survival of Batavia. Coen therefore decided that from now on ambassadors from Asian rulers were not welcome any more in Batavia. Friendly relations, he thought, could as well be kept by corresponding with local rulers. Ambassadors were not only costly to entertain; they also impaired one of the VOC's main advantages in Asia, namely the overview over the markets and the maintenance of a knowledge gap between the smaller individual traders and the company as a true multinational. In his letter to the Arakanese king, Coen congratulated him with his recent victories, and asked permission to buy rice and slaves. A special request was made to send two Arakanese *jelias* with their crew, to be used in the wars against Banten.<sup>51</sup>

In 1629 Sirisudhammaraja wrote to the Dutch governor in Pulicat, Marten IJsbrantsz. reminding the VOC's director in Coromandel that during the reigns of his predecessors there had always been a factory with employees in his kingdom as a token of the friendship between Arakan and the VOC. He asked IJsbrantsz. to establish a permanent factory as had been the custom earlier. The king was moreover annoyed that the Dutch merchants Martinus Lowijsen and Roelof Cornelisz. Kan had not allowed him to send his ambassadors and letters of friendship on board the *Edam* back to Jakarta (Batavia).<sup>52</sup> The following years the VOC however stuck by its decision to withdraw its personnel from Arakan. The VOC directors

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 14 June 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 5:295-296; *Dagh-register*, p. 2:355, entry for 16 June 1628.

<sup>49</sup> Where it incidentally never arrived, it foundered instead on the Arakanese coast after having suffered a severe battering during the monsoon. Letter from Frans Bruys to Coen, dated Pulicat 5 December 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1520-1522. In his letter Bruys described the unhappy voyage of the *Kameel*.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 14 June 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 5:295-296; Instruction from Coen for Martinus Lowijszen and council with the *fluijt* *Edam* destined for Arakan, dated Batavia 15 June 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 5:306-309. Mataram besieged Batavia in 1628 and 1629. Coen died during the siege as a result of disease. H.E. Niemeijer, *Batavia. Een koloniale samenleving in de 17de eeuw* (Amersfoort: Balans, 2005), pp. 24-25; R. Raben, *Batavia and Colombo : the ethnic and spatial order of two colonial cities 1600-1800* (PhD thesis: Leiden University, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> At exactly which victories this points is not clear. Coen probably refers to the Bengal campaigns. Letter from Coen to Sirisudhammaraja, dated Batavia 15 June 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 5:309.

<sup>52</sup> NA VOC 1098, fol. 494 Letter from the king of Arakan to Maarten IJsbrantsz in Pulicat, dated Arakan 19 April 1629. The Arakanese king interestingly still identified Batavia as Jakarta.



noted that the primary reason for not keeping a trading mission in Arakan was that for the amounts of rice needed in Batavia it was not necessary to keep staff in Arakan who could keep rice in store. VOC crews arriving in Arakan had in previous years been able to buy rice and slaves on the spot. The extra costs of keeping a factory in Arakan were therefore deemed to be not in accord with the benefits of a permanent factory.<sup>53</sup> The following years trade between Arakan and Batavia would be conducted on an irregular basis.<sup>54</sup> Free merchants operating from Batavia would be allowed to trade to Arakan even after the strict protocol laid down by the VOC's directors in 1631 came into force, indicating that at this time the VOC did not take a strong interest in the Arakanese trade.<sup>55</sup> On 28 June 1631 the free merchants Gerrit van Alenburgh and Wijbout Albertsen set sail on the yacht *Haring* for Arakan.<sup>56</sup> From Coromandel Cornelis van Houten was sent by the VOC to trade in Arakan in 1631 and 1632. In July 1631 Van Houten had left behind silver for the purchase of rice, some of which arrived in Pulicat on board the ship of a Muslim merchant from Coromandel in 1631.<sup>57</sup> Batavia sent the ship *Beets* to Arakan on 6 August 1631. The *Beets* apparently went out to Arakan not only for the purpose of trade, but also carried 15 soldiers and stores for war.<sup>58</sup> On 6 March 1632 *Beets* returned to Batavia with 270 *last* rice. The ship carried letters from Cornelis van Houten advising Batavia that the presence of the free merchants Neledoe and Van Santen had been disadvantageous to the VOC.<sup>59</sup>

Arakan proved to be a reliable and cheap source for rice and slaves, which the VOC could not do without. In 1631-1632, when Arakan had been hit hard by famine, Sirisudhammaraja was still able to provide Batavia with much needed rice, although when the famine continued in 1633-1634 rice was only available from Arakan's Bengal dominions.<sup>60</sup> On 23 March 1633 free merchants with the ship *Peerl* arrived in Batavia with 120 *last* rice and a letter of Sirisudhammaraja.<sup>61</sup> Although the content of this letter is not known, it in all

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 17 September 1628, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7: 1445-1447; Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 12 May 1629, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 5:516.

<sup>54</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 2:27,32, 65-66, entries for 27 and 28 June 1631; 6 August 1631; 6 March 1632

<sup>55</sup> From 1631 free merchants were restricted to settlement in Batavia, Banda and Ambon. From Batavia trade was allowed to Pegu, Arakan, Bengal, Patani, Cambodja, Siam, Cochinchina, Solor and Makassar. The 1631 regulations were a set back for Coen's plans aimed at a thriving Dutch colony in the East. During Coen's time in government free merchants had been given more room to operate on routes profitably exploited by the company. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 6:444-445.

<sup>56</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:27, entry for 27 and 28 June 1631. The ship was wrecked near Pegu. In 1633 the company of the *Haring* reported in Batavia that Thalun had recently conquered Chiang Mai after a campaign lasting two years and involving a siege army of 286,00 men. Idem, p. 2:65; 158-159.

<sup>57</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:44, entry for 6 August 1631.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>59</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:65, entry for 6 March 1632.

<sup>60</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:65, entry for 6 March 1632. Although in 1633-1634 the famine in Arakan had been so severe that the free merchants operating the yacht *Peerl* had to buy rice in Bengal. *Dagh-register*, p. 2:291 entry for 13 April 1634.

<sup>61</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 2:158-159, entry for 23 March 1633. The *Peerl* set sail for Arakan again on 29 May 1633. Idem, p. 2:185.

probability contained a renewed invitation to establish a permanent factory in Arakan. At least in 1634 the Batavia Council decided to 'extend the commerce of Batavia and embrace the trade of Bengal, Pegu and Arakan'.<sup>62</sup>

On 14 August 1634 two ambassadors of Sirisudhammaraja arrived in Batavia with a royal letter and presents for the governor-general. The king asked for a Dutch helmsman to conduct his ship to Batavia.<sup>63</sup> The request was turned down for unknown reasons. Curiously after the ambassadors had returned on 11 September 1634<sup>64</sup> on the ship *Tessel* via Melaka<sup>65</sup>, Batavia wrote to Pulicat that it had been a wise decision to allow the passage of the ambassadors to Batavia. This was a marked departure of the earlier policy not to allow Asian diplomats in Batavia. The reason for this change of policy by the VOC remains unclear. The council remarked that the ambassadors had not caused them any problems, but described them as a couple of misers.<sup>66</sup> On 4 April 1635 the ships *Noordwijk* and *Daman* arrived in Batavia. This time the ships brought three ambassadors from Arakan. Sirisudhammaraja now asked Batavia to assist him in an attack on Ava. The Arakanese ambassadors traveled to Batavia with a letter from the king asking for four, five or six ships to take part in this expedition. The council at Batavia refused to participate, explaining to the Arakanese king that the VOC was not at war with Burma, and that moreover they were trading with Burma.<sup>67</sup>

Although the VOC was unwilling to commit itself in a military alliance with Arakan, diplomatic efforts by Sirisudhammaraja resulted in the permanent settlement of a VOC factory in Arakan. The instructions for Adam van der Mandere, the first chief of the factory, clearly show that this time the VOC was coming to stay in Arakan.

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<sup>62</sup> 'Omme voorders haere Ed. maxima nopende d'extensie van commercie te erlangen, ende waer te nemen, alle t'gene de Comp. tegen haer swaere lasten eenich soulaes soude connen toebrengen, hebben wy voorgenomen, den handel van Bengala, Pegu ende Aracan te embrasseeren'. *Dagh-register*, pp. 2:352-353, entry for 12 July 1634. See also Om Prakash, *European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India*, The New Cambridge History of India, G. Johnson, C.A. Bayly and F. Richards ed., vol. 2.5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.132. Of course facilitated by the Mughal destruction of the Portuguese stronghold in Hugli. Van Veen, *Decay or defeat?*, p.215.

<sup>63</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:367, entry for 14 August 1634. They brought 10 cassa de Bengala and a diamond ring of 3 carat.

<sup>64</sup> *Dagh-register*, p. 2:389, entry for 11 September 1634.

<sup>65</sup> In Melaka they were transferred on 28 September 1634 to the ships *Noordwijk* and *Daman*. *Dagh-register*, p. 2:453.

<sup>66</sup> NA VOC 857 Batavia to Pulicat, dated 13 August 1635, fol. 480.

<sup>67</sup> NA VOC 1116 Resolution passed in Batavia, dated 25 July 1635 fol 151v. and NA VOC 857 Batavia to Pulicat dated 13 August 1635, fol. 480. NA VOC 857, fol. 495-496 Instructions for Adam van der Mandere; NA VOC 857, fol. 496-497 Letter from Batavia to Arakan, dated 16 August 1635. Apart from their diplomatic concerns the ambassadors had orders to invest the small sum of 1,000 Tanka in trade goods.

#### 5.4 Arakanese relations with Siam

In the first part of the seventeenth century Arakan and Siam kept close diplomatic relations. The Dutch VOC merchant Jeremias van Vliet, writing in 1638, described how during the reign of king Songtham of Siam (r. 1610-1628) there had been annual embassies from both kings to their respective courts.<sup>68</sup> Van Vliet remarked these embassies served a dual purpose. Both parties expected these annual events to contribute to the safeguarding of the political relations between the two kingdoms, as well as to promote the commerce between Arakan and Siam. This alliance broke down after the death of king Songtham. Van Vliet writes that after the coronation of the new king Prasat Thong (r. 1629-1656) a Siamese embassy was sent to Mrauk U. Although Van Vliet gives us no definite date for this embassy of Prasat Thong to Mrauk U, it is safe to assume the event took place somewhere in 1634 or 1635.<sup>69</sup> Van Vliet noted that the king of Arakan had not sent a representative to the coronation of the Siamese king. The king of Arakan did not receive the legation, saying that he could not recognize an illegal usurper as king of Siam, and he therefore refused to give audience to the ambassadors or pay any honour to them. The king did not even allow the Siamese to return to Ayutthaya.

There are several reasons that might explain the sudden change in Arakan's relations with Siam after 1629. One fact that could explain this *renversement* is that Prasat Thong, before he came to power, had only been a leading official (*khunnang*) with the title of Okya Kalahom, and that although he was related to the royal clan, he was not part of the main dynastic line. The fact that Prasat Thong had come to power after a violent and protracted court conflict and that he had overthrown the previous dynasty thus might explain the cold reception his ambassadors got at the Arakanese court. It has to be remembered that only a year before Prasat Thong's coup, Sirisudhammaraja had almost lost his own crown to a leading minister and local lord, the *Laungkrak ca*. Although this might be one of the reasons for this sudden change in Arakan's relations with Siam, the events following the rude reception of the Siamese ambassadors could also point to a very different motive.

Probably somewhere in 1635 the Arakanese sent a fleet to Tenasserim to trade. In retribution for the treatment his own ambassadors had received at the Mrauk U court, Prasat

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<sup>68</sup> Jeremias van Vliet, *Beschryving van het Koninkryk Siam. Misgaders het verhaal van den oorsprong, onderscheyd, politijke regering, d'ecclesiastique, en costumelijke Huyshoudinge van d'Edelen en Borgerlijke Lieden: als mede den loop der Negotie, en andere remarquable saaken des Koninkrijks Siam* (Leiden: Frederik Haring, 1692). For a good translation see Chris Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005) 132-133. See also NA VOC, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck to Wemmer van Berchem, dated Arakan 11 December 1614.

<sup>69</sup> Baker, *Van Vliet's Siam*, pp. 26-27, 133. As the report was probably written in Batavia in 1638, and Van Vliet mentions that in November last year (ie. 1637) hostilities broke out, before which an Arakanese trading mission was kept in prison in Ayutthaya for more than two years, and this was the mission following Prasat Thong's first legation to Mrauk U a date in 1634-1635 seems probable. The *Historical account of King Prasat Thong* by the same author written in 1640 seems to contradict this. In the *Historical account* Van Vliet puts the embassy to Arakan shortly after the coming to power of Prasat Thong in 1629 and connects it closely with his conflict with the Queen of Patani. Baker, *Van Vliet's Siam*, p. 313.

Thong threw the Arakanese traders in prison in Ayutthaya. Two years followed in which neither party seemed to be intent on solving the conflict. The Siamese had started renovating their old forts in Mergui and Tenasserim as a precaution.<sup>70</sup>

In November 1637 an Arakanese fleet appeared before Tenasserim and Mergui. The Siamese succeeded in capturing some Arakanese and brought them to the court in Ayutthaya. There they confessed that Sirisudhammaraja was bent on conquering Tenasserim and Mergui, but that he lacked the military means to execute this plan. Sirisudhammaraja had asked the Dutch and Portuguese for assistance, the Dutch had refused, but the Portuguese had offered him their assistance. Although the conquest of the two Siamese ports was deemed unfeasible, the Arakanese had sent a fleet to the Mergui archipelago to prevent Muslim traders from the coast of Coromandel to do business in Siam. Prasat Thong's reaction was to send the Arakanese prisoners back to Arakan with a letter reminding the Arakanese of the longstanding friendly relations between the two kingdoms, and threatening to send his army to Arakan if the Arakanese king kept on harassing trade in the archipelago.<sup>71</sup> The fact that a Dutch trading mission from Arakan to Tenasserim in 1639 did not encounter any problems seems to indicate that after the death of Sirisudhammaraja relations between Arakan and Siam had considerably improved.<sup>72</sup>

The blockading of the Tenasserim coast and the harassment of Muslim shipping interestingly provides us with another motive Sirisudhammaraja might have had for going to war with Siam. From the middle of the 1630s it seems that the Arakanese king himself and also the rest of his court, became increasingly interested in trade. As the Dutch factors on the Coromandel coast remarked it seemed 'that this king is soon becoming a merchant as well'. The intensifying of diplomatic relations, the blockades of rivers and coastal waters in the northern Bay of Bengal all seem to point to a mercantilist policy being gradually pursued by Sirisudhammaraja. This policy could have well been modelled on Coen's vision of Batavia as the entrepôt of the East or on Melaka's role a century earlier.

### *5.5 Bengal: the Mughals and the Portuguese*

In 1632 Qasim Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal attacked and destroyed the Portuguese settlement of Hugli. It seems the close contacts between the Portuguese of Hugli and Chittagong was a major consideration for the Emperor Shah Jahan to instruct Qasim Khan to take possession of Hugli and crush the Portuguese power. The Portuguese of Hugli were accused of assisting the Portuguese of Chittagong in the Arakanese wars against south-eastern

<sup>70</sup> Baker, *Van Vliet's Siam*, p. 109.

<sup>71</sup> Baker, *Van Vliet's Siam*, p. 133.

<sup>72</sup> Arent van der Helm had arrived on 23 March 1639 safe in Tenasserim. NA VOC 863, fol. 479-485. Letter from GG&R to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 6 August 1639.

Bengal. Qasim Khan laid siege to Hugli on 20 June 1632 and captured it on 15 September.<sup>73</sup> The Portuguese in fact deemed Arakanese military power so effective that the *Viso-Rey* in Goa asked the Arakanese king for help in an attempted recovery of Hugli in 1633 and he sent an embassy to Arakan.<sup>74</sup> The 1633 embassy to Arakan was headed by Gaspar Pacheco de Mesquita, who had already proved his worth in diplomatic negotiations with Arakan in the 1620s. Although the peace agreement of 1620 had broken down by 1623<sup>75</sup>, Goa now needed Arakanese assistance in the attempt to recover Hugli as a trading base. Gaspar de Mesquita arrived with one galleon and four frigates ready for an expedition into Bengal. The two potential partners could however not agree on the terms of their alliance. According to Manrique the Portuguese ambassador could not resolve to make certain concessions without the consent of Goa.<sup>76</sup> The Portuguese fleet accordingly left Arakan after having stayed there for five months. The combined attack on Bengal was postponed and Gaspar de Mesquita left only with rice for Melaka.<sup>77</sup>

The 1630s proved to be crucial years. In 1634 the VOC embraced trade in Bengal, Arakan and Burma, which meant it would and could not be drawn into military conflicts between these three Asian powers. Arakan could not hope for substantial military assistance from the Dutch either in Bengal or in Burma. In the same year the Burmese, admittedly as a result of the threat of Arakanese invasions moved their capital to Ava, marking the starting point of a newer and stronger Burmese kingship.

### 5.6 Mrauk U at its Zenith

In 1635, following the great famine of 1631-1634, Arakan's power had reached its zenith.<sup>78</sup> Arakanese fleets operated freely from Bengal to Tenasserim.<sup>79</sup> The same year

<sup>73</sup> Richard Burn, 'Shah Jahan' chap. 7 in Wolsley Haig and Richard Burn eds., *The Cambridge History of India. The Mughal period* reprint (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1987), pp. 189-192. Van Veen, *Decay or defeat?*, p.215.

<sup>74</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 2:241-242, entry for 8 February 1634.

<sup>75</sup> In 1623 VOC captains reported Portuguese ships from Goa and Cutchin blockading the Arakanese coast. NA VOC 1083, fol. 188-190.

<sup>76</sup> Although Manrique puts the blame for the failure of the embassy on Gaspar de Mesquita, he also makes clear that the Arakanese king probably held Manrique himself responsible. Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1 :322-323.

<sup>77</sup> Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>78</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 251 *L'apogée de la puissance militaire (1622-1652)*.

<sup>79</sup> In October 1634 representatives of the English East India Company in Masulipatnam requested their Board of Directors: 'to sent two small pinnaces to remain on [the coast of Bengal] , of 80 to 120 tons to draw little water and to carry 12 or 14 guns. The Dutch never [are] without three or four of these vessels, which trade from port to port or are employed as men of war, never idle, and clear all their great charges on this coast. There is no thought of trade into the Bay without them, the greater ships riding so far from the shore, and the King of Arracan's jellines, or small boats of war, ever scouting between them, so as neither goods nor provisions can be brought off without pinnaces of some defence, which may go up the rivers without fear.' W.N. Sainsbury ed., *Calendar of State Papers. Colonial series, East Indies 1513-1634* 5 vols. (London, 1862-1892), pp. 4:583-589.

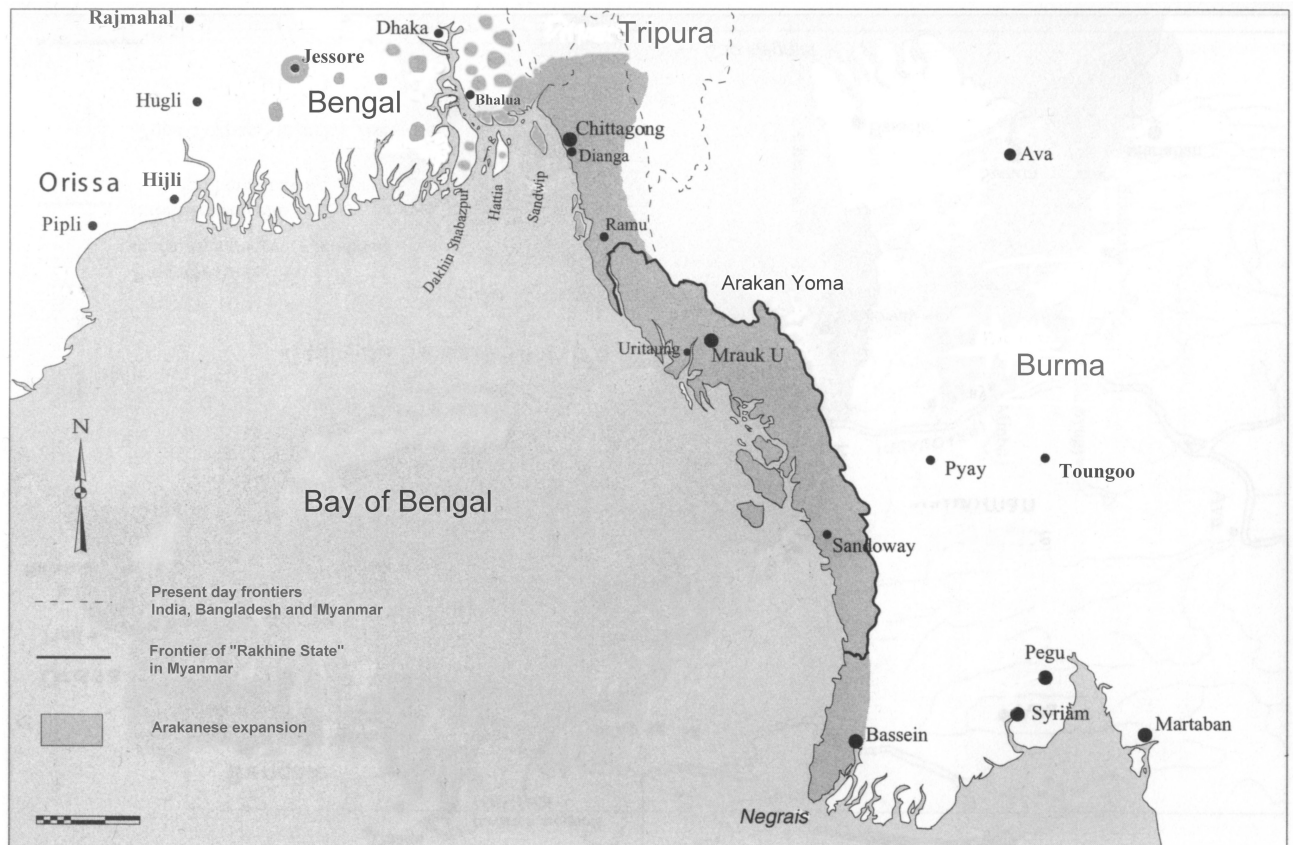
Sirisudhammaraja's official coronation finally took place. The expansion of Arakanese influence prompted the Burmese and the Mughals to retract their (provincial) capitals further inland. The Mughals felt so insecure in Dhaka that the seat of the Bengal *subah* was moved far inland at Rajmahal. The extent of Arakanese influence in Bengal is further illustrated by the fact that Bahadur Khan *zamindar* of Hijli, at least until 1644, paid a yearly tax to the Arakanese king. In fact Arakanese officials went to Hijli to collect revenue on a regular basis.<sup>80</sup> We should assume that Hijli was under Arakanese control from the early 1620s when Bahadur Khan had revolted against Ibrahim Khan and Man Khamaung established Arakanese control over the area, as was described earlier in this dissertation. Sarkar has suggested that Shah Shuja would later temporarily succeed in bringing Hijli back into the Mughal fold between c. 1655 and 1659.<sup>81</sup> The *faujdar* of Hugli Ahmed Beg in 1656 offered Candasudhammaraja an annual tribute if the king would promise his fleets would stay away from Hugli. The *faujdar* reminded the Arakanese that the payment of this tribute had been an established practice in earlier years.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644 entry for 14 March.

<sup>81</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 333.

<sup>82</sup> NA VOC 1217, fol. 278-291 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1656, fol. 284v-285. Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the economy of Bengal, 1630-1720* (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1985), p. 229. Prakash confirms the *faujdar* of Hugli was also an important merchant in Bengal.

**Arakanese expansion in the 1630s<sup>83</sup>**

The coronation of Sirisudhammaraja as described by Manrique in his *Itinerario* is a clear indication of the new self-confidence of the Arakanese monarchy. Manrique claimed that the coronation was part of Sirisudhammaraja's ambition to '*obtain the vast empires of Delhi, Pegu, and Siam*'.<sup>84</sup> Sirisudhammaraja's military achievements and foreign policy seem to confirm the ambitious goals of this king. Although the conquest of these mighty empires might seem several bridges too far, Sirisudhammaraja by military means did earn the respect of his imperial neighbours. This newly-won self-confidence of the Arakanese can also be gleaned from the coins issued at the coronation. While the first coins Sirisudhammaraja struck when he came to power in 1622 were still firmly rooted in the tradition of his predecessors, his coin of 1635 is a clear statement of Arakanese supremacy in the region. Earlier Mrauk U coins had trilingual texts in Arakanese script, Persian and Bengali. These coins, apart from the Arakanese titles of the king, also provided Muslim titles.<sup>85</sup> The 1635 coin is monolingual, in Arakanese only. The title of the king is given in Pali in Arakanese

<sup>83</sup> Adapted from Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 503.

<sup>84</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:351. The description of the coronation takes up the chapters 31 to 35.

<sup>85</sup> For instance, Sikandar Shah (Man Phalaung) or Husain Shah (Man Khamaung). Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', pp. 210-211.

script.<sup>86</sup>

The coronation of Sirisudhammaraja is described in detail by Manrique. Although several scholars have pointed out that large parts of Manrique's narrative of the coronation have been adjusted to suit the tastes of his European audience, to defend the Augustinian mission in Arakan and Bengal, and others even doubt whether Manrique was actually there, a critical reading of his text can still provide useful insights for the reconstruction of Sirisudhammaraja's reign.<sup>87</sup> Leider has raised some doubts whether Manrique was actually there at the coronation, or maybe even that the events described did not form part of the coronation of Sirisudhammaraja, but perhaps only of one of the lesser king's, the governor of Urittaung or even the coronation of the Burmese king Thalun.<sup>88</sup> There is however strong circumstantial evidence to suggest Manrique was actually in Arakan in 1635 and that the events he witnessed were in fact the coronation of Sirisudhammaraja and his twelve lesser kings. Manrique's own narrative describes how, on orders of Goa and the father provincial of his order, in 1633 he went to the Arakanese court to assist the Portuguese ambassador Gaspar de Mesquita. After the failure of this embassy he recounts how the Arakanese king would not let him go. Manrique attributed this to the fact that according to him Sirisudhammaraja blamed Manrique for the failure of the proposed Arakanese-Portuguese expedition to Bengal. After Manrique had spent 14 months in the capital he again requested his leave of the king. This time Sirisudhammaraja answered him that he would not let him go just at the time when all the princes and nobles were coming to Arakan for his coronation.<sup>89</sup> In Manrique's narrative the coronation indeed follows almost immediately, only preceded by his journey to the mountains near the Mayu river, which at the most could have taken a few months.<sup>90</sup>

The fact that Sirisudhammaraja had a new coin struck in 1635 is also evidence for his coronation that year. Arakanese coins always bear the year of the coronation. Apart from this, Dutch sources from early 1636 mention that *manjlis*, the representative of all foreign merchants in Arakan, had a role during the coronation of the Arakanese king. This suggests

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<sup>86</sup> M. Robinson and L.A. Shaw, *Coins and Banknotes of Burma* (Manchester: Lancashire and Cheshire Numismatic Society, 1980), pp. 44-65 and esp. pp. 55-56

<sup>87</sup> Leider, 'Friar Sebastião Manrique's labours in Arakan: Tilling the Lord's vineyard and defending Portuguese interests', *Journal of the Siam Society* 90 (2002), pp. 39-58.

<sup>88</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 275. It is unclear when, if or why Manrique went to Burma. In Manrique, *Breve Relação dos Reinos de Pegu, Arracão, Brama, e dos Impérios Calaminhã, Siammon e Grão Mogol* ed. Maria Ana Marques Guedes (Lisbon: Cotocvia, 1997) a visit to Burma is mentioned, but not his presence at the coronation of Thalun. It is all the more strange that in the *Itinerario*, which describes Manrique's voyages in Asia, there is altogether no mention of a visit to Burma and there also seems to be no room for a voyage to that country in the narrative of the *Itinerario*.

<sup>89</sup> According to Manrique Sirisudhammaraja said to him: 'Come Padre, how is it that you wish to go to Bengal just when all the Princes and Nobles in the kingdom are coming here to attend my coronation?', Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:324-325.

<sup>90</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, chapters 1:29-34. For the identification of the mountains of Maum with the mountains near the Mayu river see pages 114 and 118, where the gulf of Maum is described.



the coronation had recently taken place.<sup>91</sup>

The coronation was as Manrique described attended by all the princes and nobles of the Arakanese realm. On top of this the king also proclaimed Mrauk U a toll free port for the duration of his coronation. This proclamation led to an influx of traders from all over South and Southeast Asia. The description of the coronation itself might at times be fanciful or even improbable<sup>92</sup>, there are several elements in the account that have a strong relation with crowning rites of Buddhist kings in general and at the same time provide a specific Arakanese flavor. Manrique relates how Sirisudhammaraja dispatched a boat to Bengal to fetch water from the Ganges for the *abhisheka*, an ablution ceremony, he describes the presence of large numbers of Brahmins, narrates the crowning of the twelve lesser kings before the coronation of the high king himself and also gives a vivid portrayal of the role of the Buddhist monks during the coronation. All these elements point to the fact that he indeed witnessed the crowning of a Buddhist king. The Arakanese element in the narrative being represented by the description of the role of the Muslim nobles, the usage of the jewelry taken from Pegu in 1599, the description of the palace and the tour through the city of Mrauk U. According to Manrique the coronation of Sirisudhammaraja as high king was preceded by the coronation of twelve lesser kings, of which Manrique described the coronation of the king of Urittaung in detail.

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<sup>91</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 3:35-38, entry for 14 March 1636, containing a transcript of a Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 January 1636.

<sup>92</sup> See Luard's notes for the chapters 31-35 of Manrique, *Itinerario*, vol. 1.



Royal procession in Mrauk U from Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*

### 5.7 *The end of the reign of Sirisudhammaraja*

In 1638, three years after his coronation, Sirisudhammaraja suddenly died. The events leading up to his death are a much debated issue in Arakanese historiography. Arakanese chronicle traditions attribute to the reign of Man Phalaung a prophecy that the dynastic line of the Mrauk U kings would come to an end at the close of the first millennium BE<sup>93</sup> (1638 AD).<sup>94</sup> Similarly the contemporary account of Manrique, mentions that Sirisudhammaraja was apprehensive about prophecies circulating about his death shortly after his coronation.<sup>95</sup> During the following succession struggle Dutch sources finally report rumors about the usage of black magic.<sup>96</sup> The upheaval following the death of Sirisudhammaraja precisely at the turn of the first millennium of the Arakanese era seems thus to have been anticipated in Arakanese society for a long period of time and is today still perceived by the Arakanese themselves to be a decisive moment in Arakanese history.<sup>97</sup> As I have argued earlier and will substantiate below, the revolution following the death of the king in 1638 should indeed still be seen as a turning point in Arakanese history.<sup>98</sup>

As we have seen popular beliefs and old prophecies were not the only bad omens that threatened Sirisudhammaraja's position. In 1628 Dutch sources report that the *Laungkrak ca*<sup>99</sup>, the ruler of Laungkrak, had rebelled against the king and posed a very real threat to his position. This rebellion was suppressed at the time and the king had a large number of the *Laungkrak ca*'s men executed. Far from suffering from this setback, it seems that the *Laungkrak ca* only gained in importance in the years following this rebellion. During the next decade he was one of the king's chief ministers vying for power with Ashraf Khan, the chief eunuch of the king who was at the time also the *lashkar-wazir*, or commander of the army.<sup>100</sup>

A closer analysis of the years following Sirisudhammaraja's coronation could provide

<sup>93</sup> For the Arakanese era (BE), starting March AD 638, see A.M.B. Irwin, *The Burmese and Arakanese Calendars* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1909) and J.C. Eade, *The calendrical systems of mainland South-East Asia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>94</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 269.

<sup>95</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:352.

<sup>96</sup> Adam van der Mandere writes that he had heard reports claiming the son of Sirisudhammaraja had been bewitched by his father and later on murdered by black magic. '*Men segt dat hij door zijn vader gedurende zijn leven betovert is geweest ende door duijvels consten omgebracht is.*' NA VOC 1126, fol. 293 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

<sup>97</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan (Birmanie). Son histoire politique entre le début du Xve et la fin du XVIIe siècle* 3 vols. (PhD thesis : Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris 1998), pp. 2:189-190.

<sup>98</sup> Van Galen, 'Arakan at the turn of the First Millennium', pp. 151-162.

<sup>99</sup> In the Dutch Sources we find the *Laungkrak ca* as 'Longrasa'.

<sup>100</sup> *Lashkar-wazir* probably an adoption of a Husain Shahi administrative title, *sar-i-lashkar wa wazir*. Subrahmanyam, 'Persianization', 72; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 272-274; Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch tribulations in seventeenth-century Mrauk-U', *Journal of Early Modern History* 1,3 (1997), pp. 201-253, pp. 220-223 Reprinted as 'Dutch tribulations in seventeenth-century Mrauk-U', S. Subrahmanyam ed., *Explorations in Connected History. From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 200-247; Manrique, *Itinerario*, p.1:152.

valuable clues that could help to explain the end of the first Mrauk U dynasty in 1638. The coronation followed a period of prolonged draughts and famine that had started in 1631 and lasted until 1635. VOC reports indicate that large numbers of people and cattle died.<sup>101</sup> This may have undermined royal authority as the king was also responsible for the feeding of his people during times of famine through food distributions from the royal granaries.<sup>102</sup> Early in October 1635 a daughter of Sirisudhammaraja died, possibly as a result of the diseases usually associated with famines.<sup>103</sup>

Sirisudhammaraja's policy of continual warfare against the Mughals and the Burmese could also have been a reason for conflicts within the Arakanese ruling elite. In the years preceding the death of Sirisudhammaraja both neighbours sent ambassadors to Mrauk U to negotiate peace. In Bengal the attacks of the Arakanese so unsettled the Mughal governor Islam Khan Mashhadi (1635-1638) that in 1637 he sent an ambassador to Mrauk U with orders to negotiate a treaty.<sup>104</sup> The Dutch factor Adam van der Mandere reported that the ambassador brought a gift, six horses and robes of honour for the king. In his letter to the Arakanese king the Mughal governor Islam Khan urged Sirisudhammaraja to stop his attacks on Bengal. In his letter to the Arakanese king the Mughal governor wrote:<sup>105</sup>

In the meanwhile it has been reported that you, of apparent sincerity, have held out temptations and summoned all the Ferangis [Portuguese] from their abodes and having provided them with boats and sailors encouraged them to practice piracy and commit depredations on the masses. This is an extremely improper behavior and is most unexpected and astonishing. ... You should repent of and express remorse for your deeds and desist in future of such actions.

To which Sirisudhammaraja replied:

Who can think of the crown and throne by challenging the forces of Telang [Mon] and Ferang [Portuguese]? Even a Rustam, with all his strength, would become cooked food for dogs, and Sam and Nariman, with all their store of their strength and bravery, would fall as morsels to the crocodiles. Besides on the land route, five hundred huge

<sup>101</sup> Vide infra and *Dagh-register*, pp. 2:65; 291, entries for 6 March 1632 and 13 April 1634.

<sup>102</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 3:23-25, entry for 11 February 1636 containing a transcript of a letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 5 January 1635.

<sup>103</sup> The court was in mourning from her death on 6 October until 18 October. Ibidem.

<sup>104</sup> The *Dagh-register* of Batavia records for 13 February 1637 a letter dated 31 January 1637 from Adam van der Mandere. Colenbrander, *Dagh-Register* vol. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Correspondence between Islam Khan and Sirisudhammaraja (1637). Ghulam Sharafuddin Qadiri Rashidi, ed, *Ashraf al-Musauwadat* translated in Syed Hasan Askari, 'The Mughal-Mahg relations down to the time of Islam Khan Mashhadi', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 29<sup>th</sup> session (Gauhati 1959)* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 201-213, 209-210 and 211-213.

war-elephants like black clouds are ever kept ready. They are clad in iron from trunk to tail and equipped with bells, big and small, sounding high and low notes. If, as is the saying, from one end to the other the lands are full ducks, all their strength will disappear on the very sight of the flying auspicious falcon.

Sirisudhammaraja also pungently referred to earlier failed Mughal attempts to invade Arakan and the recent sack of Dhaka when, ‘Hakim Haidar and other imperial officers were mortally afraid of their lives, called for quarter and concealed themselves in every street corner and marketplace’.<sup>106</sup> The Arakanese king closed his letter expressing the hope that they would meet in battle after the rainy season. The arguably rude letters exchanged between the Arakanese and the Mughals show an acute awareness on the Arakanese side of Persian myths that reflect the presence of poets such as Daulat Qazi and later Alaol at the Mrauk U court. From a Mughal perspective the Arakanese however remained exotic barbarians who according to the emperor Jahangir had ‘no proper religion’ and who ‘eat everything there is either on land or in the sea, and nothing is forbidden by their religion’.<sup>107</sup> It shows thus how on the one hand the Arakanese were acutely aware of Mughal idiom, but also how exotic the Arakanese appeared to the Mughals.<sup>108</sup>

On the Burmese side early in 1638 Thalun also tried to forge an alliance with Sirisudhammaraja. Thalun still was unable to control Lower Burma. In 1637 the Pegu *bayin* had revolted<sup>109</sup> and Arakanese raids in Lower Burma presumably were not helpful in his attempts to control the delta. The Burmese king promised to give his sister in marriage to the Arakanese king.<sup>110</sup> This peace offering was also rejected by the Arakanese and instead of marrying the sister of the Burmese king, Sirisudhammaraja sent a fleet to raid Lower Burma. This so enraged Thalun that the Dutch factors in Ava feared a full scale war between Arakan and Burma was imminent.

Could it be that there was a faction at court that did want peace with the Mughal and Burmese empires and that those people liked to see the reign of Sirisudhammaraja come to an end? There is proof of at least two factions at the Mrauk U court vying for power in the years following the coronation. In the Dutch sources we can discern a conflict between two Arakanese courtiers which is confirmed by Arakanese chronicles and Manrique.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Subrahmanyam, ‘Persianization’, p. 47.

<sup>107</sup> Subrahmanyam, ‘Persianization’, p. 77.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, ‘Southeast Asia as seen from Mughal India: Tahir Muhammad’s ‘Immaculate Garden’ (ca. 1600)’, *Archipel* 70 (2005), pp. 209-237, p. 223.

<sup>109</sup> Baker, *Van Vliet’s Siam*, p. 126.

<sup>110</sup> NA VOC 1127, fol. 190v-191 Letter from Matthijs Leendertsz to Carel Reyniersen at Pulicat, dated Syriam 10 February 1638.

A short description of the development of the rice trade is needed to illustrate the conflict.<sup>111</sup> In 1636 the substantial Dutch demand for rice probably led to the institution of a royal monopoly on rice exports. Apart from the profits for the Arakanese, a major reason for the institution of such a monopoly could well have been the fact that the VOC had started operating as a rice merchant in Arakan itself. The VOC had observed how the famine conditions of 1635 had driven the price of rice in Arakan during the rainy season to 500% above its original price.<sup>112</sup> In doing so the VOC probably came into direct competition with local Arakanese lords and even with the king himself, who also distributed rice during the monsoon season on condition of repayment next year. The first attempt at monopolizing the rice export was made in 1635 by the *Laungkrak ca*, who also held the position of the king's treasurer and was his chief merchant.<sup>113</sup> The *Laungkrak ca* prohibited rice traders in Arakan to negotiate a price with the VOC and tried to sell rice 20% above market prices. In January 1636 the rice monopoly was however farmed out by the king to the *lashkar-wazir*, also the chief minister of the king. The *lashkar-wazir* was at that time together with the *Laungkrak ca* the most important man in Arakan after the king.<sup>114</sup> The fact that the *lashkar-wazir* was allowed to send his own ambassadors to Batavia, is illustrative of his position at the Arakanese court.<sup>115</sup> The poet Daulat Qazi even says that the reins of the monarchy were entrusted for a period of time to his patron Ashraf Khan:

The great king Sri Sudharma knowing that his life would come to an end, transferred the rule of the kingdom to the hands of his minister Ashraf Khan.<sup>116</sup>

The Dutch did not hesitate to try to play the two court factions against each other. Adam van der Mandere reported in January 1637 that he had asked the *Laungkrak ca*'s support in trying to evade the monopoly. He had brought him gifts and hoped that because the *Laungkrak ca* had recently risen in status that he could find a way to bring the price of rice further down.<sup>117</sup> If the *Laungkrak ca* could be identified, in his role as treasurer and chief merchant of the king, with the faction at court vying for peace, the *lashkar-wazir* on the other hand was

<sup>111</sup> Chapter 8 will deal more extensively with this subject.

<sup>112</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 3:23-25, entry for 11 February 1636 containing a transcript of a letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 5 January 1635.

<sup>113</sup> NA VOC 858, fol. 534-539 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 21 July 1636 identifies a person named *Josea* as the king's chief merchant. NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637 has *Josea* alternatively known as *Chama* and finally NA VOC 859 797-808 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated 11 September 1637 identifies *Longrasa* (*Laungkrak ca*) as the same person as *Chama*.

<sup>114</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:152 and Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', pp. 222-223.

<sup>115</sup> *Dagh-register*, pp. 3:58-60, entry for 28 February 1637.

<sup>116</sup> Daulat Qazi, *Sati Mayna O-lora* Candrani quoted in Ghosal, 'Missing links', p. 256. Sri Sudharma is a sankritization of the Pali title of the king Sirisudhammaraja.

<sup>117</sup> NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637. and NA VOC 859, fol. 809 Letter from the GG&R to Sirisudhammaraja, dated Batavia 11 September 1637.

probably personally and commercially involved in the faction in favor of war. He is reported to have owned ships that were active in combat and blockaded the Tenasserim coast.<sup>118</sup>

The tensions at the Arakanese court at the turn of the first millennium of the Arakanese era are vividly described by Manrique in his account of the coronation of Sirisudhammaraja. Manrique describes horrific rumors that went round in Mrauk U describing how Sirisudhammaraja, egged on by his 'Muslim preceptor', resorted to incendiarism, human sacrifices and black magic (*yatra*) to secure his hold on the throne.<sup>119</sup> Subrahmanyam has suggested that the 'Muslim preceptor' of Manrique may be identified with the *lashkar-wazir*.<sup>120</sup> The rumors reported by Manrique were accompanied by reports of an impending revolt. According to Manrique:

The Christians heard of this, and after one or two meetings decided *not to take sides with either party*, but to wait in a united body until they could see what the actual result of the present rumors would be.<sup>121</sup>

In Arakanese chronicle traditions the idea that two competing factions were warring for the Arakanese throne is confirmed. In the chronicles the end of Sirisudhammaraja's reign is put in the context of a war between two powerful magicians, one of them being the *Laungkrakca*, identified as Nga Khuthala, the other as Nga Latrone, adviser to the king.<sup>122</sup> In this version of events Nga Khuthala seduced Nat-Shin-May the queen of Sirisudhammaraja and wrote a poetical composition known as Nga Tswe, which he had little boys sing for him in the streets at night. This way he hoped to destroy the power and the glory of the king. Seven months after Nga Latrone warned the king about the imminent danger the latter died. According to this tradition contemporaries generally believed that this was accomplished by the power of the *yatra* employed by Nga Khuthala

Leider has closely analyzed the Arakanese chronicles and compared their stories with those of Manrique. On the basis of this comparison he concludes that Sirisudhammaraja probably died as the result of a conflict between the two factions at court, and he suggests that the king might have been poisoned.<sup>123</sup> This conclusion is confirmed by VOC sources quoted earlier.

<sup>118</sup> NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637.

<sup>119</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:352 and cf. Charney, *Jambudipa*, p. 192.

<sup>120</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', p. 223. n. 41.

<sup>121</sup> Manrique, *Itinerario*, p. 1:359. Emphasis mine.

<sup>122</sup> San Shwe Bu, 'Report of the honorary archaeological officer, Arakan, for the year ending 31st March 1922', *Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Burma. For the year ending 31st March 1922* C. Duroiselle ed. (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent Government printing Burma, 1922), pp. 59-63, p. 60.

<sup>123</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 265-275.

The poisoning of the king is however not confirmed by the Dutch.

In a letter to the governor-general at Batavia dated November 1638, the Dutch chief of the Arakan factory, Adam van der Mandere reported the following:

On the last day of May the king died and his son [Man Cane] was crowned the following month, on the sixteenth of June. We went to congratulate him on the twenty-fifth of that month. The new king presented us with a ruby ring of thirty or thirty-five Tanka and three coarse pieces of cloth. This new king died on the twenty-sixth of June. People say that his father cast a spell on him and that he [Man Cane] was killed by black magic.

On the third of July Longerasa [the *Laungkrak ca*] was proclaimed king. He was crowned together with the widow [Nat Shin May] of the deceased king [Sirisudhammaraja].<sup>124</sup>

According to Arakanese chronicles cited by San Shwe Bu, the crown prince Man Cane, so called because he was born on a Saturday, ascended the throne with the name of Satui Man Hla (1638), twenty-eight<sup>125</sup> days after the coronation he fell victim to small pox, and it was widely accepted that his untimely end was hastened by his own mother who administered drugs calculated to enhance the virulence of the disease.<sup>126</sup>

The result of the power struggle at the Arakanese court was therefore that the *Laungkrak ca* ascended the throne after the mysterious deaths of Sirisudhammaraja and Man Cane.<sup>127</sup> This successful coup d'état of the *Laungkrak ca* led to his coronation on the third of July 1638 as King Narapati-kri.<sup>128</sup> It is interesting to note that also in this Dutch report rumors appear in which the use of black magic is connected to the succession struggle.<sup>129</sup> Only this time the

<sup>124</sup> NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

<sup>125</sup> Here Arakanese and Dutch sources show a slight difference of 1 or 2 days.

<sup>126</sup> San Shwe Bu, 'Report of the honorary archaeological officer, Arakan, for the year ending 31st March 1922', p. 60.

<sup>127</sup> San Shwe Bu and M.S. Collis, 'The strange murder of king Thirithudhamma', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 13 (1923), pp. 236-243.

<sup>128</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan* (1998), pp. 290-99; San Shwe Bu, 'Strange murder'. San Shwe Bu relates how Nat Shin May gathered all the nobles and princes of the kingdom in a palace and kept them as prisoners until they had elected a new king, they were thus forced to choose the lover of the queen, Nga Khuthala who took the royal name of Narapati-kri. According to San Shwe Bu, 'the new king would have nothing to do with the guilty queen as soon as he was on the throne and so he built a special palace for here where she stayed the rest of her life.' San Shwe Bu, 'Report of the honorary archaeological officer, Arakan, for the year ending 31st March 1922', p. 60.

<sup>129</sup> Adam van der Mandere writes that he had heard reports claiming the son of Sirisudhammaraja had been bewitched by his father and later on murdered by black magic. '*Men segt dat hy door syn vader gedurende syn*



blame is laid with Sirisudhammaraja. As we saw in Arakanese chronicle traditions the death of the crown prince is attributed to a spell cast on him by the queen Nat Shin May. For a proper understanding of the Dutch report it has to be remembered that the Dutch entertained extremely good relations with the usurper Narapati when he was still the *Laungkrak ca*. Any stories they heard about the death of Man Cane and Sirisudhammaraja therefore probably would have emanated from the faction at court supporting the *Laungkrak ca*.

### *Conclusion*

The reigns of Man Khamaung and Sirisudhammaraja had resulted in the extension of Arakanese control over large areas of south-eastern Bengal. Mughal authority had been successfully challenged. Continuous warfare in Bengal also drove the Mughals and European trading companies away from south-eastern Bengal. The Mughals had moved their capital to Rajmahal and European trading companies were forced to abandon earlier plans to settle in Chittagong and instead set up their trading posts on the river Hugli, further away from economic centres such as Dhaka and Sripur, but safe from the Mughal-Arakanese conflict. On Arakan's eastern border, relations with Burma developed on a comparable vein. Unable to counter Arakanese military power in Lower Burma, the Burmese removed their capital city to Ava where they would also be safe from Arakanese attack. Instability at home however prevented Sirisudhammaraja to extend Arakanese control even further. At the death of Sirisudhammaraja in the year 1000 of the Arakanese era, Arakanese power in the Bay of Bengal was at its highest point. The reigns following this last king of Man Pa's royal line would see the gradual decline of Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal and the collapse of the kingdom.

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*leven betovert is geweest en door duyvels consten omgebracht is.*' NA VOC 1126, fol. 293 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DECLINE OF ARAKANESE CONTROL IN BENGAL (1638-1652)

The reign of Narapati-kri (1638-1645) was characterized by several rebellions, indicating that his authority was not directly accepted from the start. After initial victories over his enemies in Arakan and the Mughals in Bengal he soon fell seriously ill. This illness would prevent the king from ruling effectively during a large part of his reign. In the course of his reign large groups of discontents left Arakan after unsuccessful attempts to wrest royal control from the new king. A major result of these uprisings was the loss of control over the strategically important island Sandwip. In this Chapter we will see how under Narapati-kri the Arakanese slowly lost their ability to control south-eastern Bengal.

#### *6.1 The revolt of Nga Thun Khin*

Immediately following the coronation of Narapati-kri, the *lashkar-wazir* was thrown in prison, robbed of all his possessions and after a prolonged period in jail put to death. Adam van der Mandere considered this a just punishment as according to him the *lashkar-wazir* had raised himself above the rest of the Arakanese nobility and had started to behave like he was king in Arakan.<sup>1</sup> It has to be remembered that Van der Mandere had enough reasons to resent the powerful position of the *lashkar-wazir* as from a Dutch perspective he obstructed the VOC in the rice trade. The way in which Narapati-kri deposed of his primary rival is another indication that the two had been adversaries during the reign of Sirisudhammaraja, confirming the earlier hypothesis that the last years of his reign had seen an increase in factional strife amongst the Arakanese nobility. Charney has noted that the Arakanese chronicles are divided over whether or not there was a purge of the old royal family after the coming to power of Narapati-kri.<sup>2</sup> Some chronicles suggest that Narapati-kri had the princes, princesses, other royal kinsmen, the royal ministers, and royal commanders put to death, while others claim they were only disciplined. The VOC sources indicate that if there was a purge, it was very selective. There appears not to have been a substantial change in the composition of the king's Privy Council. The only person who is mentioned as being first gaoled and then executed is the *lashkar-wazir*. Narapati-kri and some of his ministers took former queens of Sirisudhammaraja as their wives, another indication the purge was not as

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<sup>1</sup> NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

<sup>2</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, p. 194.

radical as some chronicles suggest.<sup>3</sup>

The succession of Narapati-kri was immediately challenged. In August news reached Mrauk U that the governor of Chittagong, a legitimate successor to the throne, was preparing to rise against Narapati-kri.<sup>4</sup> Narapati-kri himself was not part of the royal family. Charney has suggested that it is more likely he was a descendant of a Mon minister, captured in 1600 in Pegu. This Mon minister had been given Laungkarak, a former royal city of Arakan close to Mrauk U, as his appanage.<sup>5</sup>

The news that Narapati-kri was to be challenged by a legitimate heir to the throne was reason enough for the VOC to ready itself to evacuate from Mrauk U, plans were made to embark and to proceed to Urittaung to weather the expected storm. The idea that Arakan might consequently lose its territories in Bengal caused grave concern in VOC circles:

Were they to lose these lands, the whole kingdom will be ruined. Arakan, without Bengal, will be worth nothing to the Company. Almost all the cloth is brought in *bouris*<sup>6</sup> with rice and slaves in large numbers from Bengal. In Arakan itself slaves are not to be had, other than those coming from Bengal. If the Arakanese lose Bengal it will be more profitable to establish a factory in Chittagong.<sup>7</sup>

In some Arakanese chronicles the king of Chittagong is identified as a son of Sirisudhammaraja by the name of Nga Tun Khin, while in contemporary Mughal accounts he is styled the brother of the Arakanese zamindar by the name of Mangat Rai, probably a corruption of the Arakanese Man-Raza or king-king.<sup>8</sup>

On 5 September 1638 the Dutch were summoned to court and asked to provide Narapati-kri with six gunners, who were to form part of an expeditionary force to quell the rebellion in Chittagong.<sup>9</sup> From the Mughal history of Shah Jahan it appears that even before

<sup>3</sup> See the previous Chapter.

<sup>4</sup> NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

<sup>5</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, p. 193 and n. 425.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of boat.

<sup>7</sup> 'Soo dit lant geheel in ruïne sal loopen, Arracan Bengaellen missende, sal alhier voor de Compagnie niets te verrichten vallen, want meest alle de kleeden met groote *bouris* met rys en slaven in groot getal gebracht werden, want alhier geen slaeven en vallen noch comen dan uyt Bengaelle soo dat als dan beeter en profytelycker voor de edele Compagnie soude wesen in Sitigam een comptoir te hebben.' NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638.

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnamah* [The history of Shah Jahan] 2 vols. (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1867) 2: 117-118, 2:115; Abstracts were translated in W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai eds., *the Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan. An abridged history of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, compiled by his royal librarian. The Nineteenth-century manuscript translation of A.R. Fuller* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 249-251; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 280; Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 193-194; L.S.S. O'Malley, *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers. Chittagong* (Calcutta, 1908), pp. 65-72.

<sup>9</sup> Van der Mandere had been extremely reluctant to supply Narapati-kri with the requested six gunners, for this he was censured by Batavia who accused him of having been stupid not to grant such a small request to the new

the army of Narapati-kri could reach Chittagong, troops loyal to the new king had successfully driven Nga Tun Khin to Bhalua.<sup>10</sup> The Mughals at least claimed they drove away some 200 Arakanese *jelias* who obstructed the passage of Nga Tun Khin across the Feni river. The Arakanese pretender moved to Dhaka with 9,000 followers and 14 elephants. In Dhaka he was welcomed by Islam Khan Mashhadi the Bengal *subahdar*. The fleet prepared by Narapati-kri was then sent in pursuit and entered the Bengal delta, sailing as far up the river as Sripur. Islam Khan met the Arakanese force only eight miles below Dhaka, near Dhapa. The Mughals raised several forts near the *mohana* of Khizrpur. Apparently the big guns mounted on these forts prevented the Arakanese from reaching Dhaka.<sup>11</sup> In later years the Mughals would build more permanent fortresses on the banks of the rivers around Dhaka to prevent Arakanese forces reaching Dhaka. The fort at Idrakpur from the 1660s is a good example of such a fort, with its large circular platform ideally suited to mount large guns.<sup>12</sup>



The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* has a slightly different version of the events. Shihab ud-Din Talish also describes the flight of the governor of Chittagong, whom he names Dahar Mah, with 4,000 or 5,000 followers and 19 elephants. According to Talish the Bhalua *faujdar* brought

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king. Batavia reminded him that a prompt compliance had probably improved the VOC's position at court. Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', p. 224 discussed Van der Mandere's reluctance, for Batavia's reaction see NA VOC 863, fol. 479-485 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 6 August 1639.

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnamah*, pp. 2:117-118.

<sup>11</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnamah*, pp. 2:117-125.

<sup>12</sup> Or Idreckpoer in Dutch sources. Photo's from Banglapedia online. Idrakpur, a place at a distance of about 15 miles from Dacca still contains the dilapidated remains of a small brick fort built in 1660 A.D. by Mir Jumla. The fort is situated at Munshiganj proper, on the west bank of the canal running through the town, and in the eastern vicinity of Deobogh village. The fort was built on the bank of the river Ichhamati, (the river has now dried up). The fort, quadrangular in size, consists of two main parts: i) the wider open area surrounded by curtain walls crowned by machicolated merlons with engaged rounded corner bastions pierced by musketry, and ii) the smaller area containing a round drum of huge dimension surrounded by another series of similar curtain walls. An approach to the drum is provided from the bigger court. A small magazine exists just at the foot of the drum. The fort is 270 feet x 240 feet, containing a long high platform used probably for mounting the big guns. Two other small forts were also built by Mir Jumla in the vicinity. [www.banglapedia.org](http://www.banglapedia.org)

the Arakanese party over land to the Lakhiya river, which they managed to cross to Khizrpur only one day before the arrival of the Arakanese fleet. Islam Khan, who according to Talish was at this time without his army and fleet, which were both operating in Assam, prepared the defences of Dhaka. Talish describes how the Mughals blockaded the Dhaka channel with mats of bamboo and afterwards sent their army to Dhapa, presumably to construct the forts mentioned by the *Badshahnamah*. Talish also relates how the Arakanese left after a few days without picking a fight with the Mughals. The Arakanese *ko-ran-kri*, or Chief of the Royal Bodyguard, left a letter for Islam Khan hanging from a tree in Khizrpur:

The Raja has ordered me to fulfil the following objectives: first to catch his rebellious subject, second to prevent him to attack Arakan and third to prevent him to enter Arakan. He did however not order me to attack Jahangirnagar [Dhaka], or to attack your people. Thus in compliance with my orders I have now returned to Arakan. If on the contrary, I will be given the order to come to Bengal to murder, plunder, loot and so on, I will be back next year.<sup>13</sup>

The force sent by Narapati-kri under the leadership of the *ko-ran-kri*, to put down any resistance was thus partly successful and forced the legitimate pretender to the Mrauk U throne to withdraw into Mughal territory.<sup>14</sup> Nga Tun Khin and his retinue subsequently resettled on the Mughal-Arakan frontier in the Dhaka area in December 1639.<sup>15</sup> The presence of a legitimate successor supported by the Mughal empire on the borders of the Mrauk U state presented a constant threat to the new royal house for a long time to come. Up to the conquest of Chittagong by the Mughals, rumours in central Arakan of an imminent Mughal invasion were usually coupled with those intimating an impending restoration of the old royal line.<sup>16</sup> The immediate threat to Narapati-kri was however gone.

In the rainy season of 1640 the king constructed according to VOC sources 'the largest armada ever seen in Arakan'. This fleet sailed for Bengal in November 1640. By December it was clear that Nga Tun Khin was in no position to threaten the new king and that the Mughals were not planning to assist him in any plans he might have to recover the throne.<sup>17</sup> The Mughals probably had little interest in providing the Arakanese with an excuse to sail up the Brahmaputra and did not want to get involved in a war of succession fought near Dhaka. The large armada that the king had sent to Bengal in November 1640 was

<sup>13</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 155b and 155a.

<sup>14</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnamah*, pp. 2:117-125.

<sup>15</sup> O'Malley, *Chittagong*, pp 65-72.

<sup>16</sup> NA VOC 1221, fol.469-491 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1657, folia 470v-72v.

<sup>17</sup> NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm and Abraham van de Water to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640.

reported to have lost more people than it had been able to capture. As a result the price of slaves remained high.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps as a result of the flight of the governor of Chittagong in 1638, Arakan was during 1639 and 1640 at war with Tripura. Tripura forces harassed the Arakanese from the mountains. They were notoriously difficult to attack in their hideouts in the jungle. In October 1640 the VOC reported the arrival in Arakan of three ambassadors from Tripura. The legation had been sent to conclude a peace with Arakan. It was concluded that a shortage of salt, as a result of an Arakanese blockade, had induced them to talk about peace. The war with Tripura had resulted in sharp rise in the price of cloth. In Chittagong three quarters of the cotton needed for cloth production came from Tripura.<sup>19</sup> The peace with Tripura ensured that the following season the price of cotton came down again. In January 1641 Pieter Cocqu expected that as a consequence cloth production during the rainy season in Chittagong would attain its old volume.<sup>20</sup> In February 1642, however, cloth production in the Chittagong area was again troubled by a renewed outbreak of hostilities with Tripura.<sup>21</sup>

It is unclear whether the king sent a fleet to Bengal in 1641. In October 1642 the Arakanese sent their ships to raid Bengal. The fleet was instructed to sail all the way up to the pagoda of Jagannath in Orissa. This fleet returned in December bringing with them a ship belonging to an Armenian merchant from Balasore with a cargo of lead, tin, wood, porcelain and Japanese piece goods. The cargo was estimated at 16,000 to 17,000 guilders. Apart from the capture of this ship the Arakanese had sank 11 fully laden Portuguese salt-ships. These ships had the intention of sailing to Sripur to sell their cargoes there.<sup>22</sup> On the Burma front Narapati-kri continued Sirisudhammaraja's policy of blockading the coast of Lower Burma.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1640-1641, p. 211 entry for 16 March 1641 containing a transcript of a letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 February 1641.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1640-1641, p. 211 entry for 16 March 1641 containing a transcript of a letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 February 1641. Cocqu had returned from Chittagong to Arakan on 25 January 1641 and NA VOC 865, fol. 526-530 Letter from Batavia to Arent van der Helm, dated Batavia 19 October 1641.

<sup>21</sup> *Dagh-register*, 1641-1642, pp. 140-141 entry for 24 April 1642 containing the transcript of a letter from Arent van der Helm and Lunnenburgh to Batavia, dated Arakan 15 February 1642.

<sup>22</sup> NA VOC 1143, fol. 629-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1642 and NA VOC 1143, fol. 613-617 Letter from Arent van der Helm and Abraham van de Water to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1643.

<sup>23</sup> NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm and Abraham van de Water to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640.

### 6.2 *The depopulation of Chittagong*

In December 1642 Narapati-kri fell ill. The last time he gave a public audience was on 18 December 1642.<sup>24</sup> This illness would have an immense impact on the political situation in Arakan. In the coming years Narapati-kri would withdraw himself in his palace. This would result in a power struggle within the Arakanese nobility.

The main primary sources for the reign of king Narapati-kri are the letters and diaries of the Dutch chief in Arakan, Arent van der Helm. Van der Helm had arrived in Arakan in the 1630s. As chief of the VOC's operations in Arakan he had been given a designated seat (a golden cushion) in the public audience hall of the palace, and like other persons of rank he had also been provided with a golden umbrella by the king. The diaries of 1644 and 1645 show that Van der Helm was present at the palace almost every day, lobbying for the VOC and discussing matters of state with the Arakanese nobility. Van der Helm was in this respect on a par with the lesser Arakanese nobles. Only the members of the king's Privy Council were allowed to enter the private audience hall, of course only when they were asked inside. The diaries present an interesting picture of the life at the Arakanese court.

The illness of Narapati-kri prevented him from giving public audiences between 18 December 1642 and 18 June 1643.<sup>25</sup> The sickness was apparently so severe that nobody, not even the king's eunuchs, were allowed to enter the inner courtyards of the palace.<sup>26</sup> All contacts with the palace and the royal family were during this period firmly in the hands of the queens of Narapati-kri, not even the highest ranking courtiers were allowed inside the palace.<sup>27</sup> The prolonged absence from public by the king led to civil war in Arakan. Arent van der Helm reported that within the nobility several powerful men had started behaving like they were already king. The reports of civil war and rebellion could explain why already in 1643 coins were struck by the man who would become the next king of Arakan in 1645, Satuidhammaraja.<sup>28</sup> The king finally appeared in public again on 18 June 1643. This public audience served to show the king was still alive and in control. As a result the political situation seemed to have become more stable for a while. The king's authority received a further boost when a fleet he had sent to Bengal with his chief military commander, the *ko-ran-kri*, routed the Mughal fleet in an engagement in the Bengal delta. From a total of 75 *cousabs* only five Mughal ships survived the attack by the Arakanese fleet. As a result Bengal was laid wide open for the Arakanese. The victory over the Mughal fleet served to confirm

<sup>24</sup> NA VOC 1143, fol. 613-617 Letter from Arent van der Helm and Abraham van de Water to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1643.

<sup>25</sup> NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643.

<sup>26</sup> The king ordered large quantities of medicine from Masulipatnam. *Dagh-register* 1643-1644 261.

<sup>27</sup> Subrahmanyam has *the* queen, while the Dutch text has the plural *koninginnen*. Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', p. 228.

<sup>28</sup> M. Robinson and L.A. Shaw, *The coins and banknotes of Burma* (Manchester: Lancashire and Cheshire Numismatic Society, 1980), p. 57.

the Arakanese that they now ruled supreme in south-eastern Bengal. In a letter to Batavia Van der Helm remarked that the king now thought himself invincible.

Soon after this victory however the king fell ill again. The last time Van der Helm saw the king was on 11 October 1643.<sup>29</sup> The struggle for the crown soon started in earnest again. After the king had again withdrawn himself from public he had his brother, who had up till then been his left hand man or *leiwei-mran*, put into gaol. The same brother had earlier succeeded Narapati-kri as lord of Laungkarak. In the Dutch sources he is alternately named *Longrasa*, ie. *Laungkarak ca*, or Black *Sit-ke*, corresponding in this case to *leiwei-mran*.<sup>30</sup> The imprisonment of the brother of the king is the first indication that the struggle for Narapati-kri's succession was now in full swing. In December 1643 the *ko-ran-kri*, who was still in Bengal with a large fleet rebelled. The illness of the king had now given rise to rumours of his death. These rumours had prompted the *ko-ran-kri* to attempt to take the crown per force. The *ko-ran-kri* had tempted the Portuguese leadership in Arakan and Bengal to take his side and he had killed the two principal Arakanese governors in south-eastern Bengal *Pammagia* and *Asagansougrij*.<sup>31</sup> On 11 December 1643 the Dutch were asked to assist the king in an effort to quell this rebellion. Van der Helm obliged, sending 21 men to gun the larger ships of the king's armada, in return for a free trade in rice.<sup>32</sup> The fleet, commanded by the *sattannangh*, set sail for Bengal on 16 December 1643, consisting of 29 galleons with three masts, 17 galleons with two masts, more than 100 *sanghselisz*, and innumerable *balang* and *jelias*.<sup>33</sup> The fleet was manned by some 1,200 sailors. Two days earlier 20,000 men had left over land to Chittagong. The quick advance of the king's army so unsettled the rebellious *ko-ran-kri* that on 24 December 1643 he fled, taking all the Portuguese with him.<sup>34</sup> The VOC representative in Chittagong, Hendrik ter Horst, reported that the *ko-ran-kri* had 'destroyed Bengal' and robbed all the merchants of their property before leaving the country.<sup>35</sup> Ter Horst reported that the *sit-kes* in charge of the king's fleet had orders to bring from Chittagong to Arakan all craftsmen. These reports were confirmed when early in 1644 Van der Helm wrote to Batavia that in the space of a few days more than 5,000 families had been brought from Chittagong to Arakan. These people were in fact all weavers, barbers, carpenters, potters, and other craftsmen. The king was evidently bent on curbing Chittagong's power as the area had grown into a rival centre of power in the Arakanese kingdom. At a time when his rule in

<sup>29</sup> NA VOC 1157, fol. 632-640 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 February 1644.

<sup>30</sup> Dutch sources consistently differentiate between *Sit-kes* in general and the two most powerful *Sit-kes* who are named either black and white, or simply the two *sit-kes*. This corresponds to the Arakanese titles of left and right hand man. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 380-381.

<sup>31</sup> Both are probably Arakanese names or titles hitherto unexplained.

<sup>32</sup> Van der Helm received 50 Tanka for his help, the sailors each 18 Tanka. NA VOC 1157, fol. 632-640 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 February 1644.

<sup>33</sup> *Sattannangh*, probably an Arakanese title not yet explained.

<sup>34</sup> The rebels were reported to have settled on an island in the mouth of the Ganges named Casjurij or Cassurij with the permission of the Mughal Mossendalij. *Dagh-register*, vol. 1643-1644, p. 292 entry for July 1644.

<sup>35</sup> Probably referring to south-eastern Bengal, or the Chittagong region.



Arakan was insecure this second centre of power needed to be depopulated. Rumours circulated that the king would destroy the fortress of Chittagong and build a new fort at Ramu.<sup>36</sup>

The rebellion of the *ko-ran-kri* and the assistance he had received from the Portuguese had turned public opinion in Arakan against the Europeans living in Arakan.<sup>37</sup> Van der Helm reported that people dressed in European cloths were yelled at in the streets and called traitors by all and sundry. The Portuguese who had fled had left their families in Mrauk U. The detention of families at the king's court was common practice in Arakan; also Arakanese noblemen serving the king outside of the capital city had their families living in Mrauk U. The families of the Portuguese men serving the king now had to pay for the betrayal of the king by their husbands and fathers. Their properties were confiscated and the Portuguese wives were incorporated in the royal harem or settled in the jungle. The king even went as far as to detain and subsequently resettle in the Arakanese jungles his Portuguese subjects who had received *wilayat* in Arakan proper and who had not participated in the rebellion.<sup>38</sup> In March Arakanese officials arriving from Hijli with revenues from Bengal reported the rebellious Portuguese had been seen near Hijli.<sup>39</sup>

In his letter to Batavia of 13 February 1644 Van der Helm already noted that 5,000 families of skilled craftsmen had arrived in Mrauk U from Chittagong. The days and months that follow in his diary are full of entries describing the arrival of yet more people from Bengal. From 1 to 4 March 23 ships arrived full of weavers, carpenters and other craftsmen. Between 10 and 11 March 1,300 people arrived from Bengal. On 13 March 700 persons from Bengal were brought into the palace at Mrauk U. According to Van der Helm one third of the people arriving from Bengal soon died after their arrival. He described how these people were transported almost naked and without food. Prices for food and building materials such as bamboo and cane tripled. The king requisitioned all building material to build new houses for the Bengalis. On 15 March again more than a thousand people arrived from Bengal. The king now prohibited the sale of quantities of rice larger than needed to feed one person a day. With the influx of such a large number of people without money or land of their own to provide for themselves food shortage or famine was now not far away.

The king's sickness had by this time progressed so far that it was reported that he was lame on one side of his body. The members of the king's Privy Council had not seen him in person for a long time either. The king conducted his private audiences with this council from

<sup>36</sup> NA VOC 1157, fol. 632-640 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 February 1644.

<sup>37</sup> NA VOC 1149 folia 524-567v. Summary of the diary of Arent van den Helm from 19 February 1644 to 30 October 1644, entry for 20 February 1644.

<sup>38</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 9 and 10 March 1644.

<sup>39</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644 entry for 14 March.

behind a curtain so that nobody would be able to see him.<sup>40</sup>

The mass deportations of people from the Chittagong area led to an uprising late in March 1644. On 29 March the *sattannangh*, who had commanded the fleet that was sent to quell the rebellion of the *ko-ran-kri* in 1643, returned to Mrauk U with news of the uprising. The king promoted the *sattannangh* to the rank of *sonodo*<sup>41</sup> and the *sonodo* was promoted to *ko-ran-kri*. On 1 April Van der Helm found the palace buzzing with activity. Troops were mustered and news had reached the court that the *leirei-mran* and the *kotwal* had been attacked in the Chittagong area by a force of 500 Mon soldiers, who had been settled there by the king.<sup>42</sup> The fort of Chittagong was now in the hands of the rebels who had sent their families into the woods and had vowed to defend the fort at any cost lest they be deported to Arakan as well. The rebellion of the Bengali population of Chittagong only served to strengthen the king's resolve to depopulate the area and resettle this part of the kingdom with Arakanese. On 2 April 3,000 men had already left for Chittagong and a few days later *sonodo* left with a force estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000 men. The *leiwei-mran*, who had stayed behind in Mrauk U, received news of the victory of the *leirei-mran* in the evening of 10 April 1644. The Arakanese generals had set fire to the fort and reconquered Chittagong for the king.

The pacification of Chittagong was however only a partial victory for Narapati-kri. Immediately following the take over of the fort, some 5,000 men with their families fled to Mughal controlled Bengal. Van der Helm remarked that these people, together with the persons who fled in 1638 with the previous governor of Chittagong Nga Thun Khin, and those who left with the *ko-ran-kri* in December 1643 would, if united, form a substantial threat to Arakanese control over this part of Bengal. The people who had left Arakanese Bengal were in fact the oarsmen of the Portuguese galleys, skilled in warfare and according to Van der Helm much better soldiers than the Arakanese from Arakan proper. Van der Helm remarked they were soldiers by profession and used to confront the enemy. On top of this these people had mostly been born in Chittagong and would know all the roads and waterways, so that they could easily find their way around, even at night.<sup>43</sup>

Although the governor of Chittagong had in an earlier letter to the court in Arakan requested help from Arakan to suppress the rebellion, he too was taken captive by the Arakanese army sent to put down the resistance to Narapati-kri's resettlement program. The

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<sup>40</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 15 March.

<sup>41</sup> Probably an Arakanese title not yet explained.

<sup>42</sup> *Leirei-mran*, refers to the 'White Sit-ke' of the VOC source.

<sup>43</sup> '...te meer sy inbooren van Sattigam (ende de wegen al is't by nacht bekennt) zyn ende een persoon van die tegen drie van deze Moogen derft presteeren ende vyj beter soldaten als dese syn, sulcx is oock geen wonder want de meest part roeyers van de Portugeesen vaertuygen syn en dagelijks aende dans moeten zoo dat in hun wanneer tegen haer vyant moeten veel minder (als in deze Mooghe) schrick is.' Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 12 April.

governor of Chittagong was brought to Arakan in May, where he was kept in prison in the house of the *leirei-mran* who himself stayed in Chittagong. In Mrauk U the governor of Chittagong was united with his family who, in conformity of the practice described earlier, resided in Arakan. In June the governor of Chittagong was released. It was reported that Arakanese officials from Bengal had spoken favourably about the way this governor had tried to oppose the rebellion of the *ko-ran-kri*. There were however important conditions to his release. The former governor of Chittagong would not be allowed to fulfil any official position and he would have to part with his youngest wife, who had been married to Sirisudhammaraja. This queen had been given the title Queen of Gold by Sirisudhammaraja.<sup>44</sup> In the Arakanese chronicles there is a story that is remarkably akin to the forced separation of the governor of Chittagong and his wife. Leider describes how Narapati-kri asked the advice of twelve abbots of the most important monasteries in Mrauk U on what to do with the governor of Sam thon<sup>45</sup> who had married a former queen of Sirisudhammaraja. In the end the king decided to relegate the governor to the class of water carriers and the queen to another service group.<sup>46</sup> Although we cannot be sure if the chronicles refer to the same event as the VOC source, it seems plausible enough that the same event is meant. This interesting story could well be another indication of the important role of women at the Arakanese court, even more so if we were to assume this sort of thing happened to two (or more) officials. It should equally be remembered that at the same time Nat Shin May, the most important queen of Sirisudhammaraja, who was married to Narapati-kri as well, controlled access to the royal ear. The king after all was sick and not seen outside since October 1643. It is difficult to assess the exact role and importance of these women, but it may well be that the separation of the governor of Chittagong from his former wife was more to the detriment of the first. A suspicion that is confirmed by the fact that a year later the future king Satuidhammaraja, at that moment still *ein-shei-min* would request from his uncle the hand of the same queen, 'as she was an experienced queen who could help him'. The king refused this and scorned the young boy that if he thought it was a good idea to be guided by an older woman, he would never become a good king.

The depopulation program marks the start of the decline of Arakan's ability to control south-eastern Bengal. In the course of 1644 the returning army brought with them an estimated 85,000 Bengalis, a large number of cattle, estimated at 30,000 oxen, cows, and buffaloes, and a large sum of money of about 15,000 to 16,000 Tanka.<sup>47</sup> Although these numbers seem to be very large, they were reportedly taken from lists the *leirei-mran* and *kotwal* had kept during

<sup>44</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entries for 12 April, 5 May, 12 May, 1 June and 2 June 1644.

<sup>45</sup> It is unclear which locality is meant here.

<sup>46</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p., 281.

<sup>47</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 10 June.

their campaign in Chittagong. The numbers also are in conformity with the earlier diary entries by Van der Helm describing how sometimes within one week thousands of people arrived in Arakan from Chittagong. The people who were brought to Arakan were mostly weavers, dyers and other skilled craftsmen working in the Bengali textile industry. The operation to resettle in the Danyawati area the Chittagonians as *man-kywan* or royal service groups<sup>48</sup> was however not a success.

The resettlement of large parts of the Chittagonian population in Arakan was a major issue for discussion at the Arakanese court and it caused deep divisions within the nobility. The group opposing the programme argued that the king would lose his largest source of income: the rents from Bengal.<sup>49</sup> Arent van der Helm joined this group in their opposition. Van der Helm and his friends at court argued that the mass movement of people from Chittagong to Arakan on top of this not only destroyed the weaving industry in Chittagong and was detrimental to the rice export, but also caused food shortages and eventually famines in Arakan itself. Instead of an increase in population the resettlement scheme would cause starvation and death they argued. The reasons for Van der Helm's opposition to these resettlements are not hard to find. Chittagong would not be a reliable source for cheap rice for a long time, cloth production had already come to a standstill and with the departure of the Portuguese and their oarsmen, slaves were not brought to the market. The departure of the Portuguese would moreover seriously diminish Arakanese military capabilities in south-eastern Bengal. The quality of the cloth produced in Arakan could not in any way rival that of Chittagong and Van der Helm expected that the dyers would need at least two years before they could produce high quality dyes needed for the cloth industry.<sup>50</sup>

The king and a group headed by the *leirei-mran* argued that the resettled Bengalis would soon restart their businesses again and create a flourishing weaving industry in Arakan proper. The object of the king was to secure his frontier with Mughal Bengal and to eliminate members of the Chittagonian elite as rivals to the throne. The king had come to view Chittagong as a threat to Mrauk U. The area in Bengal under Arakanese rule had developed in a rival centre of power, mostly populated by Bengalis and difficult to control from Arakan. Narapati-kri therefore wanted to resettle the Chittagong area with ethnic Arakanese and hoped to revive the trade and commerce in the area within two or three years.<sup>51</sup> He even expected to be able to restart collecting revenues from Chittagong after only one or two years.

<sup>48</sup> See M. Aung Thwin, 'Athi, Kyun.Taw, Hpayà-Kyun: Varieties of commendation and dependence in pre-colonial Burma', Reid ed. *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 64-89 and Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan* (1998), pp. 450-454. My thanks go to Jacques Leider for relating the Dutch expression "Man Ghewijn of 's konings slaven" to *man-kywan*.

<sup>49</sup> The discussions at the Arakanese court can be followed from Van der Helm's diaries for the years 1644 and 1645. Van der Helm is present at court approximately five days of the week, discussing freely with the Arakanese nobility about matters of state. Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 24 February.

<sup>50</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 493-516 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1644.

<sup>51</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 10 June.

The resettled Bengalis indeed proved to be a great burden for the king's treasury as they could not feed themselves the first few years to come. The king counted on the fact that the Bengalis would be removed from the Mrauk U area and settled throughout Arakan within 9 months or one year, after which they would be subject to taxation.<sup>52</sup> In the short-term however the skeptics of the resettlement scheme were proved right. The groups resettled in Dhanyawati were decimated by famine in 1645, partly as a result of the increased prices of rice caused by the sudden increase in population in Dhanyawati and partly as a result of the sharply diminished rice production because of the shortage of labour in Chittagong and environs. It is not clear if the plan to conversely resettle Arakanese in Chittagong was ever put into action.

In the first half of the seventeenth century a coarse cloth named Dungarees, or called *dougries* by the VOC, was exported from Arakan. These coarse cotton cloths were mainly used to clothe the slaves during transport to the Indonesian archipelago and were sold with some profit to provide clothing for slaves on Ambon and Banda.<sup>53</sup> The VOC also ordered Guineess linen from Arakan for sale to the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC). In 1656 prices of Dungarees had risen to such an extent that the VOC chief in Arakan decided to send the slaves naked to Batavia.<sup>54</sup> By 1663 Dungarees would be imported in Arakan from Coromandel where they were at that time considerably cheaper than those manufactured in Arakan itself.<sup>55</sup> The attempt to create a flourishing weaving industry in Arakan had certainly proved to be a complete failure. In 1665 the VOC chief in Arakan received 960 packets of Dungarees from Coromandel on a Muslim ship freighted by the VOC.<sup>56</sup>

The removal of a large part of the Bengali population of Chittagong also did not have the positive effect on the security of Arakan's borders with the Mughal empire as the king had hoped. Soon after the *leirei-mran* and *kotwal* had returned from Chittagong, reports reached Mrauk U that the governor of Sandwip had also rebelled, and had opened the island to the rebellious Portuguese. Sandwip was well defended and it was expected that it could only be taken with a substantial force. It was regarded of the utmost importance to bring Sandwip under Arakanese control again. From Sandwip the river of Chittagong could easily be blockaded, which the Portuguese did not hesitate to implement without delay.<sup>57</sup> The king

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<sup>52</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 10 June.

<sup>53</sup> NA VOC 863, fol. 600-607 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 30 September 1639. Arakanese cloth exports to Aceh in 1615 in F. Danvers and W. Foster eds., *Letters received by the East India Company from its servants in the East, 1602-1615* 3 vols. (London, 1896-1898), p. 3:103.

<sup>54</sup> NA VOC 1214, fol. 201-206 Letter from Hendrik de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 January 1656, fol. 204v-205.

<sup>55</sup> NA VOC 1242, fol. 739-754 Letter from Daniel Six and Nicholaas Boukes to Batavia, dated Arakan 17 December 1663.

<sup>56</sup> NA VOC 1252, fol. 401-416 Letter from Daniel Six to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 January 1665.

<sup>57</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entries for 12 and 18 June.

reacted with an order to all his subjects to ready themselves for war in September. From 19 June 1644 men with gongs proclaimed throughout Arakan that everyone was required to keep his boat ready to join the fleet that would depart in September for Sandwip. The king announced that he would lead the operation in person and that whoever was found absent would be punished severely. The loss of Sandwip was perceived as such a severe threat to the security of the kingdom that the king ordered an extra five large galleons with three masts to be built, and that he had distributed large amounts of iron to make weapons for his army.

A few days later, on 21 June, it was announced that the king had chosen the son of his eldest brother as his successor. It was expected that the king would now appear in public again to officially bestow the regalia that belonged to the rank of *ein-shei-min* on his nephew. To everyone's surprise in the event the king did not personally crown his nephew. The task to install the young man as crown prince on 23 June was left to the *leirei-mran*, who was assisted by *piesa*, *sjouppa*, *cachma*, and the son of *asagrii*.<sup>58</sup> After he had received the regalia the prince was carried three times around his house in a golden palanquin, after which he exchanged gifts with the nobles and the Dutch merchants, who were also present. The choice of the king was not applauded by the members of his privy council. The most important noblemen in Arakan told Van der Helm that they thought this young prince was a madman, or at least insane. Van der Helm suspected that *cachma*, the king's treasurer, was seeking the VOC's assistance in the event he would try to take the Arakanese crown per force. The treasurer was estimated by Van der Helm to be the richest of the Arakanese nobles, and he thought he would use his money to lure the common people into his camp.<sup>59</sup> The coronation of the crown prince did not mean the king was not in control of the government. Perhaps to prove he still ruled the country the king had the *insougrii*<sup>60</sup> of the *ein-shei-min* caned<sup>61</sup> after hearing complaints from his subjects who had told him the *ko-rans* of the *ein-shei-min* had collected more taxes from them than allowed.<sup>62</sup> The king also rebuked the prince for asking permission to marry the "Queen of Gold", who had earlier been married to the former governor of Chittagong and before that had been wedded to Sirisudhammaraja.<sup>63</sup> The king apparently went into a rage, saying that the prince was not worthy of his new position if he thought he needed to be educated by this woman. Although the sources do not permit us to venture behind the palace walls, it is highly probable that the proposed marriage was in some way connected to the succession struggle still raging at the court. After his installation the *ein-shei-min* had become part of the Privy Council of the king, and from that moment on Van der Helm regularly reports his presence at the palace.

<sup>58</sup> Arakanese title hitherto not traced, 'in *su kri*'.

<sup>59</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 17 August.

<sup>60</sup> Arakanese title as yet not traced.

<sup>61</sup> With 200 lashes.

<sup>62</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 31 June.

<sup>63</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 20 July.

### 6.3 *The loss of Sandwip*

In August and September 1644 Arakanese fears of Mughal intervention on Sandwip were proved to be just. Early in August rumours had it that Mughal cavalry had arrived on the island, and in early September news was confirmed that 100 horsemen of the Mughal frontier guard at Bhalua had arrived at Sandwip.<sup>64</sup> According to Van der Helm the Arakanese were very much afraid of the Mughal cavalry. A story circulating in Mrauk U described how last year a single Mughal horseman had scared 700 to 800 Arakanese back into their boats. The king now ordered all his noblemen to provide a *bourij* each so that in October he could collect all the paddy available in Chittagong, hoping that in doing so he could deny his enemy the food needed to sustain an invading army.<sup>65</sup> At the end of September 1644 the Portuguese 'Balerij', who had been sent by the king as an ambassador to Bengal, returned with ambassadors of Diogo de Sá, one of the Portuguese captains who had taken part in the rebellion of 1643 and had fled Arakan together with the *ko-ran-kri*. The ambassadors reported that their *capitão-mor* Manuel Rodrigo Tigre, the captains Pedro Martim, Gonçalves de Reijs de Melle had died and that Diogo de Sá had killed Manuel Cardosa, who had been the 'left and right hand' of the *ko-ran-kri*. The Portuguese came to try and settle their disputes with the king and asked him to take them back into his service. The return of the Portuguese had in fact already been predicted by the king who had in 1643 said that within a year they would be either dead or dispersed all over India, and that they would come crawling back to his feet to ask forgiveness, which now they did.<sup>66</sup> Now they were back he refused to take them into his service again.

In October 1644 the fleet sailed for Sandwip. Although the Arakanese outnumbered their enemy fifty to one, they lost 3,000 men and the nobles in charge fled the battlefield in disgrace. The king immediately sent the *leirei-mran* with a second fleet to Sandwip on 8 December 1644. In a *firman* the king offered his nobles and soldiers half of the spoils if they would succeed in bringing Sandwip under Arakanese control again.<sup>67</sup> The *leirei-mran* promised the king that he would bring the governor of Sandwip to the Arakanese court. He was however unable to keep his promises. On Sandwip he was heavily defeated and had to swim to his boat in order to save his life and sail for Dianga. He lost on the island 5,000 soldiers, some cannon, elephants, and horses. For a while it was rumoured that the *leirei-mran* would now also seek refuge in Bengal with the rest of the fleet, because he would

<sup>64</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entries for 6 August and 7 September.

<sup>65</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 15 August.

<sup>66</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 493-516 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1644.

<sup>67</sup> NA VOC 1158, fol. 175-180 Summary of the political and commercial events in Arakan compiled from the letters of the *opperkoopman* Arent van der Helm received in 1645 from Arakan. This was also published in the *Dagh-register* 1644-1645 56-60, 58.

probably not dare to come home to confront the king with this humiliating loss.<sup>68</sup> The *leirei-mran* was in the end excused when he brought with him from Bengal a large, but undisclosed, sum of money he had taken from Buddhist monks in the Chittagong area.<sup>69</sup>

In August 1645 the Arakanese king and his nobles heavily debated whether they should postpone the attack on Sandwip and organize a raid on Mughal Bengal instead. This time the mestizos living in Arakan had to take the place of the Portuguese who had fled the kingdom or who had been resettled in the jungle.<sup>70</sup> Earlier in May 1645 the king ordered all the *meijnedaers*, mestizos, and Japanese to present themselves at the court.<sup>71</sup> The eunuch *Louwedansougrij* collected all their weapons and registered them. The king issued these orders so that he would know how many foreign soldiers each noblemen controlled and how many, and what kind of, weapons these soldiers had at their disposal. The fleet finally departed for Sripur at the end of October, planning to leave Sandwip in peace this season. Sripur was also chosen because the Arakanese wanted to fetch water from the Ganges for the annual Festival of Lights (Diwali). The fleet however struck a sandbank near Sandwip when it returned from Sripur. Stuck in the mud they were an easy target for the rebels at Sandwip. In the end 17 out of 19 *Gelias* with approximately 2,000 men on them were lost to the enemy.<sup>72</sup>

#### 6.4 The illness of king Narapati-kri

The second half of Narapati-kri's reign was, as described above, marred by a severe illness that left the lower part of the king's body half dead, one leg eventually dried out completely and was reportedly severely shrunken by 1645.<sup>73</sup> In the Arakanese sources Narapati-kri is noted as a great donor to the *sasana*, patronizing monks and monasteries, and building new pagodas.<sup>74</sup> Charney has suggested two reasons why Narapati-kri might have become such an important donor to the *sasana*.<sup>75</sup> The first reason for this being that the *sangha* provided advisors whom he could trust, because he did not rely 'on the heads of the elite clans'. This should be illustrated by the creation of a council of twelve Buddhist monks, who advised him on important matters in the kingdom. The second reason being that Narapati-kri turned to

<sup>68</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 479-487 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 February 1645, fol. 485v.

<sup>69</sup> Summary of the diary of Arent van den Helm from 26 February 1645 to 29 October 1645 NA VOC 1155 folia 759-797. Entries for 26 February and 1-4 March.

<sup>70</sup> Van der Helm here describes the Portuguese as the holders of *wilayat* (*Billatteers*), the mestizos are more commonly termed *Topassen*. Diary of Van der Helm 1645, entry for 11 August.

<sup>71</sup> *Meijnedaer*. Probably a corruption of an Indo-Persian title as yet untraced.

<sup>72</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1645, entry for 8 October.

<sup>73</sup> The disease could have been Leprosy as the king was supposedly an ugly sight, could not crown the prince, probably because he was now impure and he was not weak mentally or sickly.

<sup>74</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 283 and Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 195-197.

<sup>75</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 195-197.



Buddhism for personal spiritual protection and to strengthen his authority. The first reason seems not so probable. The Privy Council of the king did consist of the leaders of elite families in Arakan and in the copious material left by Van der Helm there is never any mention of monks as the king's advisors. The king kept on discussing matters of state with his Privy Council until his death, be it from behind a screen so that no one could see the state his body was in. Leider has argued that the chronicle traditions regarding Narapati-kri are possibly the result of an early eighteenth century historiography primarily concerned with the origins of the decline of the Arakanese kingdom. They represent therefore not so much an accurate account of the events during the reign of Narapati-kri but are a reflection on the origins of the decline of the kingdom.<sup>76</sup> The idea that these chronicle traditions are not contemporary is confirmed by a factual comparison of dates and events between these chronicle traditions and the contemporary evidence provided by the records of the VOC in this Chapter. The second reason given by Charney is more probable. The illness of the king probably prompted him to patronize the *sasana* for his own spiritual and physical well being, and of course also to strengthen his authority in the kingdom, which he was not able to do in any other way because of his illness.

The Dutch sources provide substantial evidence for the king's reliance on Buddhism to restore his health. On 23 August 1644 the king prepared a vegetable meal of which the nobility and also Van der Helm were expected to buy small portions for a large amount of money. The king used this money to buy fish and rice for the Buddhist monks, who in their turn would pray for his health. In September 1644 the king had seven very precious Buddha statues made for a new pagoda he was planning to make. The statues were made of the purest gold. The largest one weighing 30 *ser*, or about 13 kilo. This statue was beset with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls. The value of this statue was estimated at 100,000 Tanka, the other six at 3,000 Tanka each.<sup>77</sup> In November and December 1644 the king distributed alms to all the Buddhist monks, Brahmins, and *Roegies* in Arakan., to a total of 460,000 Tanka.<sup>78</sup> On 4 July 1645 the king ordered his treasurer again to distribute alms to the, according to Van der Helm, already extremely rich Buddhist monks.<sup>79</sup> In the space of 18 days the king had 40,000 Tanka distributed. The alms giving was accompanied by large festivities with dancers from Pegu, musical performances and the firing of small guns. Thousands of monks entered the palace daily. According to the Arakanese nobles, whom Van der Helm questioned about the ritual, all this was done to restore the king to his former health. On 9 October 1645 Van

<sup>76</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p., 283.

<sup>77</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 13 September.

<sup>78</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 479-487 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 February 1645, fol. 485v. has Rouwelis, Bramenis and Roegies as the recipients of the alms. It is not clear to which group *roegies* refers.

<sup>79</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1645, entry for 8 July. This time only Rouwelis are mentioned as recipients.

der Helm reported that the king had again invited some 2,000 monks<sup>80</sup> to come to the palace and receive their *ismole* or alms. Finally, more evidence for the idea that the king turned to Buddhism in an attempt to restore his health, is provided by Forchhammer who noted that:

king Narapati-kri was recommended by his astrologers to set up a large number of statues of Gotama [imitations of the Mahamuni image] about Launggyet to expel the fever; the statues black with age and exposure still sit [as melancholy solitary guardians] in the paddy fields about Nankya, but the climate is as bad as ever.<sup>81</sup>

It seems clear that the sudden distribution of precious metals, alms giving, the construction of new pagodas and new Buddha images were made possible by the plunder obtained during the destruction of Chittagong the previous years.

The last year of Narapati-kri's reign factional strife determined the atmosphere at the Arakanese court. A confrontation between Van der Helm and The *rwa ca* of the *bandel* on 14 September 1645 illustrates the situation nicely.<sup>82</sup> Van der Helm had lashed out to a servant of the *rwa ca* who had offended him in public. The *rwa ca* was extremely angered by this and said to Van der Helm:

that his behavior was unheard of and quite unacceptable, that his servants had never before been hit by a captain, and that Van der Helm evidently thought he was already king in Arakan because he had dared to hit a royal servant inside the palace walls.

To which Van der Helm replied saying:

as everyone knows there are these days so many kings in this palace that the presence of one more would not make any difference.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rouwelis.

<sup>81</sup> E. Forchhammer, *Notes on early history and geography of British Burma: Arakan* (Rangoon, 1891), pp. 48-49.

<sup>82</sup> The person holding the appanage of the Mrauk U harbour. The *bandel* was at Diegrepare

<sup>83</sup> 'Ghylieden hoort gesamentl. hoe sy ons hier in ues. bywesen toespreecken, en ghy straft haer daer niet over, dien volgens ben ick genootsaecht, 't selve haer in u bywesen en hier in't fort te doen, want soo imant van ues allen ons soo bejegende soude het ues niet ongeloont laten, al souw hier sterven, mits spronck op en gaf dien onbeschaemde guyt een trap met onse voet op zijn borst, dat achterover viel, ende doen noch eenige slagen met de staert van onse wayer, die inde hant hadde, in zijn aengesicht, Rosje syn meester die daer present was ende alles benevens de groote hoorde en sach, begost seer te flumineeren, seggende syn volcq noyt slaech oft stoot buyten Coninx paleys van geen capiteyns en hadden gehadt en wy ons lieten voorstaen al coninck te syn, dewyle syn volck in't paleys dorst slaen, wy zeyde daer syn dagel., soo ooghschynel. byjckt, hier soo veel coninghen, dat het op een niet aen en compt'. Diary of Van der Helm 1645, entry for 14 September.

The same day a conflict over the protection of a garden<sup>84</sup> between the *leirei-mran* and the eunuch *Louwedansougrij*, both members of the Privy Council, resulted in the imprisonment of the *Louwedansougrij*. The king's authority finally ebbed away as he became weaker and weaker. A few months before the death of the king the Dutch factor described the Arakanese king in unflattering terms, excusing himself for his harsh words to his superiors, but hoping Narapati-kri would die soon, Van der Helm ended a letter to Batavia describing Narapati-kri as: 'this old, half dead, impotent king hiding in his palace'.<sup>85</sup>

In a letter dated 22 February 1646 Arent van der Helm announced that the king had finally died and that the son of his brother had succeeded him peacefully.<sup>86</sup> The letter itself with all the details regarding the succession has not survived as most of the VOC documentation from Asia for 1646 is no longer extant.<sup>87</sup> According to Leider Arakanese chronicle traditions all claim Narapati-kri was succeeded by his own son.<sup>88</sup> The contemporary Dutch sources however never mention the existence of a son of Narapati-kri. The coronation of Narapati-kri's nephew in 1644 as *ein-shei-min* and the statement that the son of his brother had succeeded him, prove that at least this time the crown was not handed down from father to son, as described in the Arakanese chronicles.<sup>89</sup> It is however curious that the Dutch authors Frans van der Heijden en Willem Kunst in their travelogue describing their shipwreck in the Bay of Bengal claim Satuidhammaraja was the son of Narapati-kri, who they say died in 1646. They also state that his coming to power was the final result of a war of succession. It therefore seems that already in the early 1660s, when Van der Heijden and Kunst were in Arakan, the notion that Satuidhammaraja had been Narapati-kri's son had taken root in Arakan, or was at least the preferred version of the genealogy of the reigning royal family.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Which could mean a fruit garden, a plantation of (betel) palms, etc.

<sup>85</sup> NA VOC 1159, fol. 369-383 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1645, fol. 381.

<sup>86</sup> NA VOC 1160, fol. 13 Generale Missive van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, dated 15 January 1647.

<sup>87</sup> The *Dagh-register* for 1646 is missing as well.

<sup>88</sup> Phayre however has a list of Arakanese kings in which Satuidhammaraja is also styled Narapati-kri's brother's son. Phayre, *History of Burma*, p. 303.

<sup>89</sup> For the chronicles see Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, passim.

<sup>90</sup> F.J. van der Heiden and W. Kunst, *Vervarelyke schipbreuk van't Oost-Indisch jacht Terschelling onder het landt van Bengale; Verhalende desselfs verongelukken, en den gruwelijken hongersnoot van 32 schipbreukelingen op zeker onbewoont eilant, daer sy van't wrak met een vlot aenquamen. Hoe sy van het selve eilant in Bengale landen, en voorts in 't veltleger van den grooten Mogol, tot in 't koninkrijk van Assam landewaerts opgevoert zijn. Benevens een bondige beschrijving der koninkrijken van Arrakan, Bengale, Martavan, Tanassery &c.* 2nd edition; (Amsterdam, 1675), p. 83. NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1661., fol. 896. On 31 October 1661 10 sailors of the *Terschelling* were handed over to Gerrit van Voorburg. They were captured near Dianga after having been sent out by their captain to seek assistance after their ship was wrecked near the Sunderbans. The location of their shipwreck is marked on the map of Bengal made on orders of the chief of the Bengal operations of the VOC Mattheus van den Broeck, which is reproduced elsewhere in this dissertation.

### 6.5 *Satuidhammaraja*

Satuidhammaraja (1645-1652) was 26 years old when in November or December 1645 he succeeded his uncle as king of Arakan. Not much is known about his short reign, which lasted until his death in February-March 1652. In Leider's work on the Mrauk U kingdom his reign only begets just more than one page in a book totaling more than 500 pages. Dutch sources on the reign of this king are also scant as the VOC left Arakan in May 1647 when long standing conflicts over the rice trade and the killing of several Dutch free merchants had developed in a *casus belli*.<sup>91</sup>

The Arakanese chronicles describe several military expeditions by Satuidhammaraja to the North-East and Bengal. Rammapura<sup>92</sup> and Kamboja<sup>93</sup> are mentioned as to have renewed their submission to the Arakanese king.<sup>94</sup> The ruler of Takkatya<sup>95</sup> and six other principalities are also said to have come again under Arakanese suzerainty. The evidence from the chronicles thus points to a gradual restoration of central authority in the Arakanese kingdom, following the disastrous effects of Narapati-kri's reign on the authority of the king throughout Arakan. Apart from these brief remarks in the chronicles, Dutch sources provide only two fragmented snapshots of Arakan during the reign of this king.

Following the abrupt departure of Arent van der Helm in May 1647, Satuidhammaraja had sent two ambassadors, one of them named *Ugga* the other *Ammon*<sup>96</sup>, to Batavia. The ambassadors had orders to try to tempt the VOC to renew its trade with Arakan.<sup>97</sup> The VOC felt a renewal of the trade with Arakan could be useful, but was not necessary because its metropolitan centers at Melaka and Batavia were sufficiently provided with rice and other sources of slaves had been found in Coromandel. The recent conquest of Melaka and the victories in Sri Lanka, moreover meant the VOC's military position vis-à-vis its Asian counterparts had also improved considerably. Jacobus Hensbroeck was therefore sent to Arakan with orders that were primarily aimed at exacting an exaggerated amount of damages from the Arakanese. Hensbroeck's orders also specified the need for apologies from the Arakanese following the death of Company subjects enslaved in Arakan. Hensbroeck was instructed to declare war if these demands were not met and to start the attack immediately if the king failed to comply. Satuidhammaraja himself was informed of the VOC's intentions in a letter sent to him by the governor-general Cornelis van der Lijn, who declared in no

<sup>91</sup> The backgrounds of these conflicts are vividly described in Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants'.

<sup>92</sup> Leider suggests this might be an Indianized name of Ramu. Note that this place is also mentioned in the Letter from Man Khamaung to the VOC, quoted in a previous Chapter.

<sup>93</sup> Leider suggests the area North of Chittagong might be identified with Kamboja.

<sup>94</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p., 285.

<sup>95</sup> Leider suggests Dakatiya, near Bhalua.

<sup>96</sup> Oega in the Dutch sources.

<sup>97</sup> NA VOC 873, fol. 145-147 Instruction for Jacobus Hensbroeck, dated Batavia 21 October 1649.

uncertain terms:

We, who are in times of need not only merchants, but soldiers as well, are resolved to make our intentions crystal clear to your Majesty. According to the laws of nature and to safeguard our rights we are prepared to declare war on Arakan in compensation and revenge for the never heard of and horrific killing of our people<sup>98</sup>, the affronts shown to our resident, and in recompense for our losses and the debts remaining in Arakan, of which you shall be acquainted by our captain. Our captain has orders to attack and blockade your country, with the aid of more ships that will be sent to him. With the help of God he will destroy your country as much as he can. We therefore hope your majesty has the wealth and prosperity of his country foremost in his mind and we suggest he will think wisely, so that we might get what is due to us and your majesty will in return get a peaceful and rich country,

With which we recommend your majesty in the protection of God.<sup>99</sup>

The diary of Hensbroeck's embassy has been preserved and provides us with a unique picture of Arakan under the reign of Satuidhammaraja during the first three months of 1650.<sup>100</sup> After his arrival at the mouth of the Kaladan river on 5 January 1650, Hensbroeck sent the ambassadors to the king, who at that time had gone to Paragri<sup>101</sup> to pay homage to the Mahamuni.<sup>102</sup> On 14 January they returned with news that the king was eager to read what the

<sup>98</sup> Dutch free merchants from the yacht *de Goeden Engel*, operating from Melaka arriving with contraband in Arakan and consequently condemned to serve as *man-kywan* in Arakan where they died from diseases. See Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and tyrants' for a description and infra Chapter 8 for more details.

<sup>99</sup> '*Soo syn wy, die in tyde des vereyschende, soo wel soldaten als coopluyden syn, mede van resolutie onse meeninge de majesteyt rondelycq bekent te maecken. Dat is, volgens de wet der nature, tot manctenue van ons recht, Arracan den oorloge aen te seggen, in revengie vanden onnatuerlycke noyt gehoorde en gruwelycq ombrengen onses volcx, de doorgaens gepleechde affronten onser residenten, als voldoeninge van onse achterheden ende uitstaende schulden, gelycq in dien gevalle dan door onsen capitain bekent sal gemaect werden, ende ordre heeft in't wercq te stellen, omme met de macht van schepen, die hem dan staen toe te comen alle advemien ende Arracanse revieren te infesteren, besetten, ende allen affbreuck te doen soo veel mogelycq, ende met de macht by Godt ons verleent, uyt te voeren sal syn. Wy willen dan tot een besluit uwe majesteyt tot welstandt van't Arracanse ryck indachtigh maecken, hem wel ende wysselycq te beraden, op dat wy contentement ende uwe majesteyt een vredigh florissant ryck mach erlangen, waarmede wy uwe majesteyt inde bewaringe Godes bevolen laten.*' NA VOC 873, fol. 148 Letter from Cornelis van der Lijn to Satuidhammaraja, dated Batavia 21 October 1649.

<sup>100</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants' has extensively used the diary in an attempt to analyze the VOC source as a proto-colonial discourse, focusing on notions of tyranny. The inclusion of the instructions for Hensbroeck and the letter from Batavia to the Arakanese king in his article would have enlightened much of his discussion of the embassy of Hensbroeck, which sometimes misses the point when attempting to analyze the behavior and actions of the two parties. This is for example striking when Subrahmanyam ridicules Hensbroeck's suggestion the king had organized a show of force to impress his might on the VOC, something which does not sound improbable when we keep the text of Van der Lijn's letter to the king in mind.

<sup>101</sup> Here written Sragrij.

<sup>102</sup> NA VOC 1177, fol. 124-195 Summary of the diary of our trip to Arakan with the yacht *Leeuwerik* from 22 October 1649, containing the most important events which happened to us in this kingdom by Jacobus Heusbroeck. Entry for 5 January 1650.

governor-general had written, the following days were spent on translating the letter. While on board the ship the Arakanese ambassadors related how a while ago the king had shed many tears over the death of one of his most important lords the *Laungkarak ca*.<sup>103</sup> The *Laungkarak ca* and a group of other high ranking nobles had been murdered in eastern Bengal by the local Arakanese governors of Bengal. The *Laungkarak ca* and the other officials had been sent to Bengal by Satuidhammaraja to collect taxes; they were killed when they were invited to a party by the Arakanese governors there. They had actually been burned in the houses where they had been invited to a feast. Only one nobleman escaped to bring the news to the court in Mrauk U.<sup>104</sup> This report confirms the notion in the Arakanese chronicles that Satuidhammaraja was campaigning in Arakan to restore control. It also shows that by 1650 Satuidhammaraja was all but sure of his footing in Bengal. The disastrous policies of his uncle had left Satuidhammaraja with a divided kingdom.



The *Karaweik* in Rangoon<sup>105</sup>

The Dutch envoy Hensbroeck was finally allowed to present himself at the king's feet on 5 February 1650, almost a month after he had arrived in Arakan. Hensbroeck himself speculated that he had been kept waiting so that the king could assemble the large army to impress him while he was being rowed towards the king's temporary floating palace near Paragri. Given that Hensbroeck carried letters, the contents of which was already known to the king, threatening Arakan with war, this is a distinct possibility. Hensbroeck describes the spectacle on the river as follows:

we arrived in the middle of a very wide royal river [with] a countless many galliots of

<sup>103</sup> Here *Tompaxa*.

<sup>104</sup> Dairy of Hensbroeck, entry for 18 January 1650.

<sup>105</sup> Fashioned after the floating palaces of the Burmese kings, but now made out of concrete. See also the illustration of a Burmese royal barge in H. Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia, embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam and China; with notices of numerous missionary stations, and a full account of the Burman Empire* 2 vols. (London, 1839) p. 1:113.

which several were rigged like ships in the Moorish manner, as also a great number of galleys lying at anchor, besides over 1500 *jelias*, which we saw on either side along the shore, all full of well armed soldiers carrying small iron and metal pieces, all decked out with flags and liveried in the king's colors with golden shields and standards, apart from the these ships there were about 4,000 *prahu* and other vessels with provisions. For two-and-a-half miles<sup>106</sup> armed soldiers flanked both shores, with cavalry in Persian style and some elephants with golden howdahs.<sup>107</sup>

The total numbers of soldiers was estimated by Hensbroeck at 350,000, adding that in his opinion the king had pressed his whole army and a good part of the Arakanese population to attend his arrival. Although the estimate of 350,000 seems too high, it is likely Satuidhammaraja wanted to impress the warlike VOC that he possessed a large army. The king received Hensbroeck onboard a temporary palace that was fashioned on three royal barges, of which the central ship was made to resemble the mythical bird *karaweik*.<sup>108</sup> The vessels had large galleries with pillars and were decorated with painted cloth resembling the night's sky and carpets with gold and silver patterned motives. The audience did not bring the Dutch and the Arakanese anything nearer to each other. When the king had terminated the audience by closing the window behind which he sat, and the Dutch had left the floating palace, the court and the army disbanded. Soon the large crowd that had greeted the Dutch envoys disappeared. The following day Hensbroeck got news from the monk from the *badr maqam* at the mouth of the Kaladan that reinforcements had arrived. A second audience with the king in Mrauk U on 27 February did not serve to resolve the differences between the VOC and the king. Dutch demands amounted to 800 slaves and 23,660 Tanka, before they could even start rethinking trade with Arakan, whereas the king was unwilling to accede to these demands and wrote Van der Lijn a letter in which he told him that these demands were unjust and unfounded. On 1 March 1650 the Dutch made their escape from Mrauk U, after having been told they could not leave without Satuidhammaraja's permission. Hensbroeck, in compliance with his orders, started attacking Arakanese shipping in the Kaladan, and after a tumultuous retreat reached Urittaung on 3 March with several *jelias* and their crew as his prizes. The result of this embassy should not, as Subrahmanyam has suggested, be seen as a

<sup>106</sup> Dutch miles.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', p. 239.

<sup>108</sup> 'naer syn tente geroeyt te werden, welcke tenten op 't cierlyckste van wit lywaet overspannen waren, op 's Conicklycke prauwen, welcker twee neffens malcanderen leggende, wel schenen de grootste maer de derde de aensienelyckste als synde gemaect op 't fatsoen van een haen, met welckers hals (in plaetse van de steven) was leggende tusschen beyde 't assterste van de twee voorsz. groote prauwen, soo dicht aen den anderen ende met cleden behangen dat men gevouchelyk van d'een inden anderen conde treden sonder eenigh water te sien, dese vaertuygen waren binne verciert met pilaren ende galderyen die alle met geschilderde cleeden (gelyck als 't verhemelt) becleet waren ende de vloer was met alcatieven beleydt' .. Diary of Hensbroeck, entry for 5 February 1650.

failure, nor should the privateering expedition sent to Arakan that same year be seen as another attempt to re-establish friendly relations.<sup>109</sup> Hensbroeck had been sent to Arakan to fight a war. Hensbroeck was expressly authorized to attack Arakan if Satuidhammaraja would fail to give in to Dutch demands for compensation. Following the Arakanese unwillingness to accept the VOC terms the company immediately decided to send an expedition to Arakan.

### 6.6 War between Arakan and the VOC

On 23 August 1650 Pieter Cocqu received instructions for a privateering expedition aimed at the Arakanese littoral.<sup>110</sup> Cocqu, who had been in Arakan in the company's service in Arakan since the 1630s and possibly already earlier was very well acquainted with the region as a private merchant, was ordered to go and plunder the Arakanese coast and rivers in compensation for the losses already mentioned.<sup>111</sup> The VOC had decided not to send a blockading fleet as Arakanese maritime commerce was regarded as of no great importance. Instead it was thought more profitable to attack the Arakanese in a way familiar to them, by going slave raiding in the Arakanese countryside with a fleet of shallow draft ships.<sup>112</sup> Cocqu was the best man for the job; he had been the VOC representative in Dianga. In Dianga he had accompanied the Arakanese and Portuguese fleets that went slave raiding in Bengal. There was therefore probably not one person better equipped to head this expedition than Cocqu.

The plan was to follow the coast from the point of Negrais and start the raids near the river of Talak, or the island of Cheduba, from there the expedition should proceed to the river *Augruckim*.<sup>113</sup> Leaving the river of *Augruckim*, the month of February 1651 should be used to attack and plunder Arakanese shipping destined for India, taking care to leave other local merchants in peace. After February Cocqu was to proceed to the Mayu and the two islands under the command of Martim d'Alfonso<sup>114</sup>, the final destination being Sandwip. The slaves captured were to be sent to Melaka or Masulipatnam. Sandwip was included in the plans of the expedition because the company thought it could use the island as a base instead of Arakan. The ruler of Sandwip had already since 1645 freed himself from Arakanese control.

<sup>109</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', pp.245-246.

<sup>110</sup> NA VOC 874, fol. 326-327 Commission for Pieter Cocquij with three yachts and a boat destined for Arakan, and NA VOC 874, fol. 327-334 Instructions for Pieter Cocquij and council of the yachts *Delfshaven*, *Klein Batavia*, *Troostenburgh* and the *chaloupe Siam* to cruise along the rivers and coast of Arakan.

<sup>111</sup> Cocqu was known in Arakan as captain Lagohin, see *Dagh-register*, vol. 1653, p. 113.

<sup>112</sup> 'Om dit voorgenomen dessain naer de menige aen te leggen, ende wel uyt te voeren is geen ander wech open als langs de wal ende op de rivieren te gaen moes-coppen op hare vaertuygen, als af-loopen der dorpen alsoo Araccan gantsch weynige en van geringe importante frequentatie by der zee is hebbende; waer toe oock soo lichte jachten ende kleyn vaertuygen derwaerts uyt setten'. NA VOC 874, fol. 327-334 Instructions for Pieter Cocquij, fol. 329-330.

<sup>113</sup> This is not the Kaladan, because this is known as the Kacchapanadi Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 302.

<sup>114</sup> Saint Martin's island (Now in Bangladesh).



Cocqu had with him 4,000 Reals of eight to persuade the Sandwip governor to allow the Dutch to build a factory there and to provide them with slaves. The expedition was not a total success for the VOC. In 1651 Satuidhammaraja had just sent to Bengal a large fleet to regain control over Sandwip. The news that Cocqu was plundering the Arakanese littoral caused such a fright at the Arakanese court that this fleet, of about 800 ships, quickly returned to Arakan. Cocqu thought it not advisable to engage this fleet with only 4 ships in his own company. He therefore retreated to Batavia again, without sailing for Sandwip. Cocqu finally brought only about 145 Arakanese as slaves to Batavia.<sup>115</sup> It was reported that as a result of the war with the VOC and the plundering of the Arakanese countryside the position of Satuidhammaraja as king had received some severe blows and rumours were heard that a rebellion was imminent. Satuidhammaraja's reign would indeed not last much longer; he died under uncertain circumstances about a year later in April 1652 at the age of 34.

### *Conclusion*

The coup d'état of Narapati-kri in 1638 led to a prolonged period of instability in the Arakanese kingdom. The resistance to his rule from members of the old royal family in the Chittagong area and the threat that Chittagong posed as an independent centre of power in the Arakanese kingdom moved Narapati-kri to move against Chittagong. The resettlement of large groups from the Chittagong area to the Arakanese littoral had however not the desired effect. On the contrary Arakan's ability to control south-eastern Bengal was seriously handicapped when as a result of the resettlement several important groups deserted the Arakanese king and moved to areas outside royal control. Satuidhammaraja would be able to restore royal authority to some extent but as we will see in the next Chapter Arakan was soon about to loose its remaining grip on south-eastern Bengal.

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<sup>115</sup> NA VOC 1182, fol. 15v-17 Generale Missiven van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, dated Batavia 24 January 1652.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE END OF A GOLDEN AGE (1652-1692)

Candasudhammaraja (1652-1684) was 13 or 14 when he succeeded his father Satuidhammaraja as king of Arakan in 1652. The reign of Candasudhammaraja would last until his death in 1684. It is during his reign that the gradual loss of control over Chittagong that had been initiated by the disastrous policies of Narapati-kri would lead to the conquest of the city by the Mughals. The loss of Chittagong eventually even resulted in the collapse of the Mrauk U state as a whole.

The rosy picture that is today generally painted of Candasudhammaraja's reign as the height and culmination of the Mrauk U dynasty seems to have been based primarily on one source: the seventeenth century travelogue of the Dutch physician Wouter Schouten.<sup>1</sup> In the following paragraphs it will become clear that the reign of Candasudhammaraja was all but peaceful and should rather be seen as the last phase of a long decline that had set in with the usurpation of the Mrauk U throne in 1638 by Narapati-kri. At the same time the Mughals advanced further East during the time the Mughal prince Shah Shuja was *subahdar* in Bengal.

#### 7.1 The VOC returns to Arakan

Candasudhammaraja at the start of his reign proclaimed a temporary cessation of taxation for the duration of three years. This measure was deemed necessary because his father had increased taxes to such an extent that the country had been considerably impoverished.<sup>2</sup> Alaol aptly describes the situation:

All those who had gone away to different countries in fear of the former king and had suffered from sorrow and grief, now returned, hearing the greatness of the king Candra Sudharma, and forgot the sorrows of this place which had gone wrong.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp., 287-288 and passim. Wouter Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie; Vervattende veel voornamen voorvallen en ongemeene vreemde geschiedenissen, bloedige zee- en landt-gevechten tegen de Portugeesen en de Makassaren; Belegering, bestorming en verovering van veel voornamen steden en kasteelen. Mitsgaders een curieuse beschrijving der voornaemste landen, eylanden en koninkrijcken en steden in Oost-Indien; haer wetten, zeden, godtsdiensten, costumen, drachten, dieren, vruchten en planten. Als oock sijn seer gevaerlijcke wederom-reyse naer 't vaderlandt, daer in een bysondere harde ontmoetinge met d'Engelsche oorloghs-vloot, soo in Bergen Noorwegen als in de Noord-Zee* (Amsterdam: Jacob Meurs en Johannes van Someren, 1676).

<sup>2</sup> Heijden en Kunst, *Vervarelyke schipbreuk*, pp. 82-89.

<sup>3</sup> Alaol, *Sayaphul Muluk Badiojjamal* quoted in Ghoshal, 'Missing links', p. 263. The Bengali poet sanskritized the name of Candasudhammaraja to Candra Sudharma.

The young age at which Candasudhammaraja became king meant that during the early years of his reign the country was governed in his name by a group of *Sit-kes*.<sup>4</sup> Dutch sources indicate that all these men were now largely *homines novi*, an indication that the reign of Satuidhammaraja had not come to a peaceful end.<sup>5</sup> In his introduction to the *Padmavati* Alaol also says that when Candasudhammaraja succeeded to the throne in 'his prime youth', the rule of the kingdom was vested in his patron Magana Thakur, adding that the young king was married to his sister.<sup>6</sup> In 1656 it was reported that the king was still not interested in the affairs of state and that he was very much depended on the advice of 'his monk'. This monk was in May 1656 accused of treason and after lengthy discussions in the palace thrown into the jungle.<sup>7</sup> This incident was followed by rumours that the brother of the king had attempted to take the crown, the details of which are not clear.<sup>8</sup>

After an invitation to return to Arakan by Candasudhammaraja, the Dutch company returned in 1653 to Arakan because the supply of rice to Batavia was endangered by a war with Mataram.<sup>9</sup> The VOC again needed Arakan to feed its cosmopolitan centres like Melaka and Batavia and Ambon and Banda, slaves were only a secondary concern.<sup>10</sup> The governor-general of the VOC in Batavia Carel Reniers sent Johan Goessens as his ambassador to Arakan to negotiate a peace with the Arakanese king. Goessens arrived with a list of 17 points the VOC wanted to incorporate in a treaty with Arakan.<sup>11</sup> This time both parties seemed willing to compromise. The Dutch were received by the king on 16 February on which occasion he showed he was favourably inclined to the reestablishment of a VOC factory in Arakan. Negotiation on the exact wording of the treaty now started and Goessens made frequent visits to several *Sit-kes* to discuss the terms of peace. On 6 March a *firman*, in Arakanese, Portuguese and Dutch, was received allowing the company a free and unmolested trade in Bengal, which was sent immediately to the VOC commissioner in Pipli Johan

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> NA VOC 1200, fol. 235-252 Report for the governor-general Carel Reniers and the council of India concerning the embassy [of Johan Goessens] to the king of Arakan, dated Melaka 12 June 1653., fol. 245v.

<sup>6</sup> Alaol, *Padmavati*, quoted in Ghosal, 'Missing links', pp. 259, 264. It is not clear who this Magana Thakur actually was. He probably died in 1658. On the reception of the *Padmavati* see Thomas de Bruijn, *The ruby hidden in the dust. A study of the poetics of Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavati* (Leiden, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> NA VOC 1214, fol. 201-206 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 January 1656 and NA VOC 1217, fol. 278-291 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1656.

<sup>8</sup> NA VOC 1217, fol. 286v.

<sup>9</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1653, pp. 112-113 entry for 26 July 1653 containing the translation of a Letter from Candasudhammaraja to the governor-general in Batavai n.d.

<sup>10</sup> Rice is the primary motive to return to Arakan, slaves for the Spice islands are of secondary concern. NA VOC 876, fol. 704-708 Instructions for the council of the yachts *Johan Baptista* and *Kat*, and the *fluit Os* destined for Arakan, dated 7 October 1652 and NA VOC 876, fol. 709-727 Instructions for Johan Goessens, dated Batavia 7 October 1653., fol. 709.

<sup>11</sup> J.E. Heeres and F.W. Stapel eds., *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico Indicum. Verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten*, Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 57, 87, 91, 93 en 66 (The Hague, 1907-1955), vol. 2 pp. 54-61. This is the text originally proposed by Reniers and not the actual treaty.

Verpoortere.<sup>12</sup> The king also sent out orders to the Portuguese in Dianga to bring their slaves to market in Arakan. After the Dutch had left Arakan in 1647 the Portuguese had stopped bringing their slaves to the Arakanese markets, but instead started selling them in Dianga or Pipli. On 12 March a free trade in rice and slaves was promised by the king, but not yet officially proclaimed in the country by men with gongs. After Johan Goessens had threatened to go to Coromandel to buy rice, and had sent the ships down to Urittaung to prove he was serious, the peace treaty was finally officially pronounced in public and made over to the Dutch. The treaty finally consisted of 16 articles:

1. First, all previous events between the two sides will never again be spoken of, forgotten and banished from memory, as if they had never happened.
2. Of the seven Dutchmen captured on the Ganges near Hugli, and subsequently sent to Arakan, and now restored to the VOC, three will remain in the VOC factory in Arakan until his majesty will have received the rest of his people captured by the VOC.
3. The king of Arakan will issue strict orders that his majesty's armada will not molest or attack VOC ships or sloops at anchor near Pipli or anywhere on the river Ganges. Offenders will be severely punished, and their punishment will be promptly executed.<sup>13</sup>
4. VOC ships arriving in Arakan will promptly receive experienced pilots and *jelias* to bring them up into the *bandel*.
5. That VOC letters to his majesty will be handed over to his majesty immediately, without having to wait three or four weeks, as if they were not important, or offensive to his majesty.
6. When the VOC captain wishes to speak his majesty, he will always be received in audience, if the king is not available in a public audience he will be allowed to seek an audience in the private audience chamber of the king.
7. That the VOC will be allowed to trade freely in his majesty's domains in Arakan and Bengal, nowhere excepted, as well on water as on land in commodities such as slaves, rice, wax etcetera that are allowed to the VOC, without having to accept guards or spies in and around our factory.
8. That the VOC will be allowed to trade, negotiate and correspond with whom they see fit, be they of low or high standing. That the VOC will not be forced to buy goods at inflated prices from people they do not want to trade with, like it happened in the time

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<sup>12</sup> NA VOC 1200, fol. 241.

<sup>13</sup> The king sent a *firman* to the Portuguese *capitão-mor* in Dianga not to attack Dutch shipping in Bengal. This royal order was not always adhered to. In 1655 the Portuguese from Arakan had taken goods from the VOC in Bengal, which were returned later on the basis of the Arakanese-Dutch treaty. NA VOC 1212, fol. 138-168. A similar thing happened in 1664 when a group of 10 to 12 *jelias* plundered the Ganges. *Dagh-register* 1664 594 entry for 30 December 1664.

of the *lashkar-wazir* and later, but that the company shall be allowed to buy goods at the market conditions.

9. Not only shall the company be allowed to trade freely in all goods they see fit, but also shall they be exempt from all taxes, tolls, *raderijen*<sup>14</sup>, or *tsieonkans*, or by whatever name these taxes may be known. This will apply to all goods the company brings in to the kingdom and all goods bought and transported here in Arakan and Bengal, or any other places that are under the king's jurisdiction.
10. That VOC officials will be allowed to embark and disembark goods in their ships without having to contend with guards or inspectors, like was the practice before 1638. Only when the company embarks slaves, the people of the *kotwal*, *rwa-ca*, and *sangma* will be allowed to check that the VOC is not exporting *man kywan*, or persons speaking Arakanese and those who are more than seven years in Arakan. If they find these people they will take them back and present the VOC immediately with substitutes.
11. That the VOC will be allowed to change money at going rates against Arakanese currency or such goods as they may see fit, without losing money in the process.
12. That the company shall be given a spacious and suitable spot of land to build a factory, safe from fires from neighboring houses.
13. That when company officials have an audience with the king, they will be allowed to have their own translator nearby.<sup>15</sup>
14. That when they have an audience with the king they will show him respect according to their own customs and shall not be forced by the *kotwal* or someone else to be thrown on the ground in front of the king, to be laughed at by all and sundry
15. That the king will present the VOC with the *firman*s confirming the free trade in Arakan and Bengal as agreed to above. That these *firman*s will be immediately announced and proclaimed by the gong throughout the country
16. That the king will restore to the VOC the children procreated by Dutch subjects with indigenous women, namely: the child of Adriaan van der Stel, the child of Bastiaan Jacobsz., two daughters of Jan den Engelsman, of which one is married, and one daughter of Claes Harmsz. Bischoep.

Signed in the palace of the king of Arakan, dated 22 March 1653.

<sup>14</sup> From the Persian *rahdar* for toll-collector.

<sup>15</sup> The VOC brought two translators to Arakan in 1653, one named Manuel de Mense – in Arakan known as Pamiara - who spoke Arakanese and Bengali, the other named Joost de Roover who spoke Bengali. De Roover, whose name translates as “robber” was appropriately named as he had been out several times with the Portuguese fleet to raid Bengal for slaves during the time of Van der Helm. Pamiara or Manuel de Mense had also been part of the mission of Hensbroeck and the expedition of Cocqu. NA VOC 1200, fol. 249v. and *Dagh-register*, vol. 1653, pp. 114-115.

The treaty is an important document as it testifies the extent to which the Arakanese were willing to compromise to get the Dutch company to settle in Arakan again. Dutch claims to old debts and references to alleged malpractice by the Arakanese in previous years did not make it in the final treaty. But, all in all the treaty was almost a copy of the articles proposed by the VOC at the start of the negotiations. The VOC now enjoyed a tax and toll free trade throughout Arakan van Chittagong. The return of the VOC fitted in a policy of the new king to try to attract trade back to Arakanese ports and to reinvigorate the Arakanese economy.

The king had at the start of his reign not only promised his subjects freedom of taxes, but he had also released all the Portuguese who had been jailed by his father. These Portuguese had resettled in Dianga and had restarted their slave raiding in Bengal in 1653. The departure of the VOC had meant the end of the slave trade in Arakan. Slaves were not brought to markets in Arakan anymore, but were instead sold in Dianga or Pipli.<sup>16</sup> This was reflected in the fact that slave prices are from 1653 reported in Rupees and not in Tankas.<sup>17</sup> The Arakanese market for slaves had disappeared, not only because of the departure of the VOC, but also because indigenous demand had collapsed, possibly because of the gradual drying up of revenues from south-eastern Bengal. The fact that the Portuguese now sold their slaves outside Arakan in Dianga and Pipli meant that the king had to reorganise taxation. The Portuguese now had to hand over to the king 25% of the slaves captured in Bengal, instead of paying a percentage per slave sold on the Arakanese market as had been the practice earlier.<sup>18</sup> The slave trade also seemed to have become more and more a Portuguese affair. It is significant that the *firman* ordering the Arakanese fleet not to attack Dutch shipping in Bengal was addressed to the Portuguese *capitão-mor* in Chittagong and not to the Arakanese governor, suggesting that now it were primarily Portuguese captains that went slave raiding and plundering in Bengal. It also confirms the idea that Arakanese control over Chittagong had significantly declined since the end of Sirisudhammaraja's reign.<sup>19</sup>

In 1655 the king issued a *firman* that his Portuguese subjects should start bringing their captives to Arakanese markets again. The Arakanese seemed to be afraid that the Bengali community in Chittagong because of the slave trade would become increasingly powerful and that they would soon become a threat to Arakanese authority. A heavy tax was levied on the

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<sup>16</sup> See Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, pp. 3:7-16;58.

<sup>17</sup> The silver Tanka weighing about 10.6 gm. had been the standard coin of Bengal before the introduction of the heavier silver Rupee of 11.6 gm. By Humayun or Sher Shah between 1538-1545. Arakan adopted Tanka standard coins, but the Arakanese kings never minted to the Rupee standard. Michael Mitchiner, *The land of water. Coinage and History of Bangladesh and later Arakan, circa 300 BC to the present day* (London: Hawkins, 2000), p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> NA VOC 1212, fol. 138-168 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 November 1655., fol. 146.

<sup>19</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1653, pp. 112-113. Letter from the king of Arakan.

Bengalis in Chittagong in order to reduce their spending power.<sup>20</sup> The Arakanese governor in Dianga, or *Bo Man*, collected the best slaves as tribute and tax for the king. The hold of the Arakanese king over the Portuguese community in Bengal appeared to have considerably decreased since the troubles following the 1638 dethronement of the old royal family. In the late 1650s Candasudhammaraja several times sent letters to Batavia with excuses regarding his inability to force the Portuguese to bring their slaves to markets in Arakan.<sup>21</sup> VOC servants in Arakan also complained to Batavia that their colleagues in Bengal were not helping to improve matters as these were buying slaves from the Portuguese in Pipli.<sup>22</sup>

The return of the Portuguese to Arakanese controlled Bengal and the restart of slave raiding prompted Mughal authorities in Bengal to send ambassadors to Mrauk U. The *faujdar* of Hugli Ahmed Beg offered Candasudhammaraja 2,000 Rupees annually if the king would promise that his fleets would stay away from Hugli. The ambassador recalled that the payment of this annual tribute had been an established practice in earlier years. It is interesting to note that the same Ahmed Beg also came to trade in elephants in Arakan on account of his Mughal lord.<sup>23</sup>

The 1650s witnessed high inflation in Arakan. Gold prices soared and the king prohibited the export of gold. The scarcity of gold was part of the general rise of the prices of almost all commodities in Arakan.<sup>24</sup> The price of cowries<sup>25</sup> had also risen since the VOC arrived in Arakan in 1652 from 1 Rupee for 80 pounds to 1 Rupee for 50 pound. The sharp increase in the price of cowries in 1659 seemed to have been caused by a large fire that destroyed a warehouse full of cowries. In February 1659 a ship of the *rwa-ca* of the *bandel* departed for the Maldives to buy new cowries.<sup>26</sup> The shortage of cowries was aptly described by Schouten:

When people in Arakan go to the local markets, they pay with cowries. These cowries

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<sup>20</sup> The king in fact revoked the earlier tax exemption that he had issued for three years at the start of his reign and now claimed arrears for these three years. NA VOC 1214, fol. 190-200v Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 24 December 1655., fol. 190v-191.

<sup>21</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1656-1657, pp. 168-169 entry for 10 January 1657, containing the translation of a Letter from Candasudhammaraja to the governor-general in Batavia, n.d. and *Dagh-register*, vol. 1657, pp. 158-160 entry for 16 May 1657, containing the translation of a Letter from Candasudhammaraja to the governor-general in Batavia, n.d.

<sup>22</sup> NA VOC 1212, fol. 138-168 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 November 1655.

<sup>23</sup> NA VOC 1217, fol. 278-291 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1656, fol. 284v-285. Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company and the economy of Bengal*, p. 229. Prakash confirms the *faujdar* of Hugli was also an important merchant in Bengal.

<sup>24</sup> NA VOC 1221, fol.469-491 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1657, fol. 473v-474 and 475-477.

<sup>25</sup> Shells from the Maldives used as currency in Arakan.

<sup>26</sup> NA VOC 1233, fol. 565-576 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 24 march 1660., fol. 572v-573.

are small shells, of which you get 80 for one blank<sup>27</sup> If one wishes to buy a fish or two, a lot of these little shells are needed. The smallest Arakanese coin is the Tang [Tanka] or Moorish Roepie [Rupee], which is worth about 25 Dutch stivers.<sup>28</sup> If one exchanges one Tang, one gets in return about 2,660 shells. To carry all this you then need a large sack and someone to carry your money on his back.<sup>29</sup>

### 7.2 *The Mughal advance in south-eastern Bengal*

In December 1656 news reached Mrauk U that the Mughal governor of Bengal Shah Shuja had assembled an army to invade Arakan.<sup>30</sup> The Arakanese feared that he would bring with him a legitimate heir to the Arakanese crown. Rumour had it that it was a relative of Sirisudhammaraja who led the invading army. The army was said to consist of thousands of foot soldiers, cavalry and elephants, all heading to Chittagong. Unconfirmed reports told the Arakanese that the ruler of Sandwip had joined the Mughals in their advance on Arakan. The Arakanese immediately mobilized everything they had. The fleet had not been used for a long time and lay dismantled on shore. Frantic efforts were made to reassemble the boats and in the meantime a provisional army, of a few thousand Mon soldiers was sent over land to Dianga. The fleet was ready to be launched on 21 December 1656, a week after news of the impending invasion had reached Mrauk U. This fleet consisted of *ghurabs* and *jelias*, manned with about 7,000 men and led by the *ko-ran-kri*. After this fleet had left, repairs to the rest of the fleet continued and a formidable land force was assembled. On a daily basis small groups of 500 to 600 men departed in the direction of Dianga. People were pressed into service until well into January 1657, at the end of which month finally a veritable armada of about 60,000 men departed for Bengal. The army now totalled an estimated 100,000 people, both on land as on water.<sup>31</sup> The Arakanese busied themselves in repairing the forts in Chittagong and on the route between Bengal and Arakan proper. Mughal prisoners however reported that Shah Shuja had changed his plans and now aimed for Tripura. The statements of the Mughal prisoners were confirmed when the king of Tripura requested Arakanese assistance. The

<sup>27</sup> A blank was a small Dutch silver coin of about 0.75 stivers or 0.0375 *guilders*.

<sup>28</sup> 1.25 *guilders*. As there was a considerable weight difference between the Tanka and the Rupee it is confusing that Schouten seems to treat the two coins as of the same value. In the 1650s the VOC estimated the Arakanese Tanka at 24 stivers and the Rupee in Arakan at 28 stivers. NA Collectie Radermacher 467 *Specie-boek van alle maten, gewigten, en gelden so in India ter plaetse alwaer de E: Compagnie negotieert werden gereekent* (c. 1650). The silver Tanka weighed about 10.6 gm. the heavier silver Rupee of 11.6 gm. The Arakanese never minted to the Rupee standard. Mitchiner, *The land of water*, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> NA VOC 1221, fol. 469-484 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1657, fol. 470v-472v.

<sup>31</sup> The large number of this army is realistic as the Dutch factors in Arakan subsequently described the capital city and the lands around it as almost desolate. Wouter Schouten described the city in 1660 as having a population slightly larger than Amsterdam, which had by the middle of the seventeenth century about 200,000 inhabitants. Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 151.



Arakanese readily complied. Tripura was not only a strategic buffer between Arakan and the Mughal empire, it also provided Arakan with cotton and other strategic goods. Although Tripura was now the main objective of the campaign, Mughal troops were seen only six miles from Chittagong.<sup>32</sup> The campaigns of Shah Shuja in south-eastern Bengal are not well known. A possible relic is the Shah Shuja mosque in Comilla, which is said to have been built to commemorate his victory over Tripura.<sup>33</sup> It is a distinct possibility that one of the major results of Shah Shuja's campaign was that the Arakanese now irretrievably lost control over areas such as the Hijli *zamindari*, Jessore and parts of the Meghna delta. Shah Shuja's campaign of 1656/7 should be earmarked as the first step towards complete Mughal control in south-eastern Bengal. From Dutch reports it is clear that before 1656 Hijli and Dhaka were for example outside direct Mughal control. In 1657 Batavia expressed its pleasure at the decision of Pieter Sterthemius, the Bengal director of the VOC, not to assist Shah Shuja in his campaign against Dhaka and the Arakanese.<sup>34</sup> In March 1657 the Arakanese army returned from Chittagong, with the approach of the monsoon fears of Mughal invasion had ebbed away. The *ko-ran-kri* and *sangerij*<sup>35</sup> did not return as they had died in Chittagong.<sup>36</sup> A major, if temporary, result of Shah Shuja's campaign in south-eastern Bengal was the submission of the last of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, the *zamindar* of Hijli, Bahadur Khan, known as the *Masnad-i-Ala*.<sup>37</sup> It should be recalled that in Chapter 5 it was shown that Arakanese officials went regularly to places like Hijli to collect tax from the early 1620s to at least 1644.<sup>38</sup> The hypothesis that it is only after Shah Shuja's campaigns that the Mughals gained control over south-eastern Bengal is further substantiated by the fact that Shah Shuja made a fresh assessment of the revenue of Bengal in 1658. This settlement was the first complete overview of Mughal incomes from Bengal since Abul Fazl.

<sup>32</sup> NA VOC 1221, fol. 469-4484 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1657, fol. 482v.

<sup>33</sup> Vide in voice Shah Shuja in *Banglapedia*.

<sup>34</sup> NA VOC 881, fol. 305-316 Letter from Batavia to Pieter Sterthemius, dated Batavia 19 July 1657, fol. 311. '*De versochte adsistentie inden optocht van den prins na Decca, tegens d'arracanders, is wel gerefuseert.*' Shah Shuja tried to force the VOC to cooperate threatening to prohibit company trade in the Mughal domains if they refused to assist him in his wars in eastern Bengal. Sterthemius blatantly refused saying that the Mughals would think twice before they destroyed the substantial source of revenue the VOC was. NA VOC 1220, fol. 109v-110 Letter from Batavia to Holland, dated Batavia 17 December 1657; NA VOC 1221, fol. 760-761 Letter from Pieter Sterthemius to Holland, dated Hugli 4 December 1657.

<sup>35</sup> An Arakanese title as yet untraced.

<sup>36</sup> Reportedly as a result of poisoning. NA VOC 1221, fol. 484-491 Letter from Hendrick de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 March 1657.

<sup>37</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 333.

<sup>38</sup> Diary of Van der Helm 1644 entry for 14 March.

### 7.3 *The flight of Shah Shuja to Arakan*

In March 1660 Gerrit van Voorburg reported that on several occasions Mughal ambassadors had arrived in Arakan in a short space of time. The ambassadors had been sent by Zain al-din, one of Shah Shuja's sons.<sup>39</sup> It was a much debated issue whether these men had come to seek Arakanese assistance or to ask asylum for Shah Shuja, one of the sons of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.<sup>40</sup>

Shah Shuja had been the Mughal *subahdar* of Bengal since April 1639. His reign is perceived to have been peaceful and rather quiet. This is mainly because there seems to be an acute shortage of sources to build anything like a historical narrative on.<sup>41</sup> Shah Shuja had withdrawn the Mughal capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Rajmahal. In the preceding pages it has been suggested this move was partly motivated by continued Arakanese aggression in this part of Bengal. We have also noted that there are indications that during a certain period Shah Shuja or his governors were prepared to pay the Arakanese an annual tribute or *peshkash* in return for peace. Shuja seems to have concentrated on strengthening Mughal control over West Bengal, although his campaign against Tripura in 1656-1657 testifies that he also tried to gain more control over the south-eastern parts of the *subah*. Shah Shuja had installed as his *diwan* the great *zamindar* of the Dhaka area Munawwar Khan,<sup>42</sup> the grandson of Isa Khan of Bhati and son of Musa Khan. Munawwar Khan acted as the chief of the Bengal *zamindars* and admiral of the Bengal flotilla. All this suggests south-eastern Bengal was only nominally under Mughal control during most of Shah Shuja's reign.<sup>43</sup> The old ruling families, once the leaders of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, still held a firm grip on this part of Bengal. The suggestion that they just as the *zamindar* of Hijli would have paid taxes to the Arakanese annually is therefore also not at all strange. The Bengal *zamindars* could not expect much support in any potential conflict with Arakan from their *subahdar*, who lived comfortably in far away Rajmahal.

In 1657 the emperor Shah Jahan fell seriously ill and he named his son Dara Shukoh as his successor. Dara Shukoh proclaimed himself the new emperor and a succession struggle between the sons of Shah Jahan quickly followed. Shuja also crowned himself emperor in Rajmahal. Shuja's attempts to take the Mughal crown were ultimately unsuccessful and his armies were several times defeated by his brothers. The decisive blow to Shuja's ambitions was dealt by his brother Aurangzeb and his general Mir Jumla in December 1658 when he

<sup>39</sup> M. Siddiq Khan, 'The tragedy of Mrauk U (1660-1661)', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 11,2 (1966), pp.195-254, 198 quoting the *Alamgirnamah*.

<sup>40</sup> NA VOC 1233, fol. 565-576 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 24 march 1660., fol. 573.

<sup>41</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 333.

<sup>42</sup> The great landowner and admiral of the Bengal flotilla 'Monoirchan' in the VOC sources. *Dagh-register* vol. 1664, p. 554.

<sup>43</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 372. Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', pp. 197-198.

defeated Shuja at Khajwa near Allahabad.<sup>44</sup> It took Mir Jumla more than a year to dislodge Shuja from his last stand at Tanda on the other side of the Ganges. The Bengal rivers presented Shuja with a temporary defence as Aurangzeb's general did not possess a fleet, which Shuja as *subahdar* of Bengal did have at his disposal. In April 1660 Shuja was finally forced to flee to Dhaka, which he left also on 6 May.<sup>45</sup>

Shuja's flight to Arakan after he had left Dhaka has inspired a host of scholarly articles, romantic stories, poems, and even a play by Tagore.<sup>46</sup> The best attempt to reconcile the various accounts of Shah Shuja's flight to Arakan and the subsequent death of the prince and his family is the article 'The tragedy of Mrauk U (1660-1661)' by M. Siddiq Khan. In following paragraphs the study of Siddiq Khan will be analyzed in the light of the letters of the chief of the Dutch factory on Arakan, Gerrit van Voorburg and the *Oost-Indische Voyagie* of Wouter Schouten. Siddiq Khan did not have access to the original letters of Gerrit van Voorburg; he could only use the extracts published in the *Dagh-register* of Batavia, and also had to make do with the translation from 1707 of the *Oost-Indische Voyagie* into French as the *Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes orientales*.<sup>47</sup>

It is generally accepted that Shah Shuja's initial intention was to seek out a safe place from where he could find a ship willing to take him to Mocha, and from there to Mecca and eventually Persia or Turkey. At the time of his flight access to harbours on the Hugli river had already been blocked by Mir Jumla and with the onset of the monsoon in May Shuja needed a safe haven to await his passage across the Indian Ocean. To ask asylum from the king of Arakan was now the only option for the Mughal prince. From 6 May Shah Shuja slowly proceeded from Dhaka to Dianga, where he arrived only on 3 June.<sup>48</sup> Shuja had presumably waited in Dhaka for the Arakanese fleet to arrive since early April, but after having been waiting for nearly a month and with Mir Jumla's army drawing closer every day, he had decided to start moving by early May.<sup>49</sup> Siddiq Khan has signalled that Mughal and European sources have slightly divergent accounts of the route taken by the prince. There is one group of sources that say Shuja and his party were taken by boat from Dhaka or Sripur directly to Arakan, the other tradition has it that Shah Shuja travelled over land to Tripura, and from there reached Dianga. Considering that the journey from Dhaka to Dianga took almost a

<sup>44</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 335-338.

<sup>45</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 339-342.

<sup>46</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, pp. 126-147; A. Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1727), pp. 2:26-35; Harvey, 'The Fate of Shah Shuja 1661', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 12 (1922), pp. 107-115; Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', pp. 195-254; Rabindranath Tagore, 'Dalia', *Rabindra Racanabali* vol. 5 (Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1984), pp. 52-57, adapted and translated by George Calderon, *The Maharani of Arakan. A romantic comedy in one act founded on the story of Sir Rabindranath Tagore*. (London: Francis Griffiths, 1915).

<sup>47</sup> Gautier Schouten, *Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales, commence l'an 1658 & fini l'an 1665 traduit du Hollandais* (Amsterdam, 1707).

<sup>48</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 127-134 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 21 January 1661.

<sup>49</sup> Siddiq Khan 'Tragedy', p. 208.

month, it is likely that the prince moved over land most of the time. Arakanese *jelias* would normally cover the distance between these two places in less than two weeks. The debate over which route was taken is perhaps superfluous when we consider the fact that Shuja at several stages of his voyage would have needed boats to cross the large Bengal rivers. It could therefore well be that although he travelled over land, his passage across major rivers was made possible with the help of Arakanese and Portuguese ships.

From Dianga Shah Shuja took again almost two months to reach Mrauk U, where he arrived on 26 August.<sup>50</sup> En route from Bengal to Arakan the Portuguese who were sent to ferry the Mughal prince to Arakan robbed him of a considerable part of his treasure. Gerrit van Voorburg claims the Portuguese took jewellery, gold, and cash worth about 23 ton in gold.<sup>51</sup> Niccolao Manucci, a Venetian gunner in the service of Shuja's brother Dara Shukoh, says it was Manuel Coelho, the Portuguese captain in charge of one of the prince's ships laden with treasure, wrecked the ship on purpose on the Arakanese coast and later retrieved the valuables.<sup>52</sup>

In Arakan the arrival of Shah Shuja provided sufficient reason to reinforce the Chittagong frontier. The Arakanese expected that Mir Jumla might try to enter Arakan and take the Mughal prince to Aurangzeb per force.<sup>53</sup> The *ko-ran-kri* was sent with a large part of the fleet to Chittagong to protect the frontier. Arakanese chronicles quoted by Siddiq Khan identify the *Leiwei-mran* as the head of the fleet sent to Bengal. Interestingly the Arakanese sources say that the fleet went to Bengal to lay claim to 'the twelve towns of Bengal'<sup>54</sup>, which had been promised by Shah Shuja in return for his asylum in Arakan. The fleet was according to these chronicles defeated in a night attack by Mir Jumla. The Dutch sources on the other hand indicate that there had been no formal engagement between the troops of Mir Jumla and the Arakanese.<sup>55</sup>

After the monsoon season had passed, it became apparent that the Arakanese king was unwilling to let the Mughal prince leave his country. Schouten reports that Shah Shuja became more and more uneasy with his forced stay in Arakan and that he had asked the king for leave to spent time outside Mrauk U. The Mughal prince, according to Schouten, feared the Arakanese king would have him killed to get hold of the large treasure he had with him. He therefore used the opportunity to leave Mrauk U and he hid himself and his family in the countryside.<sup>56</sup> After a few weeks it seemed the prince, his family and his treasure had disappeared. According to Schouten they were hidden by Arakanese or Muslim inhabitants of

<sup>50</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 127-134 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 21 January 1661.

<sup>51</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 127-134 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 21 January 1661.

<sup>52</sup> Harvey, 'The fate of Shah Shuja', p. 113 quoting Manucci.

<sup>53</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 127-134 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 21 January 1661.

<sup>54</sup> An expression often used in Arakanese chronicles to describe south-eastern Bengal.

<sup>55</sup> Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', pp. 221-222.

<sup>56</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, pp. 143-144.

Arakan. In January 1661 some 70 to 80 well armed Bengali followers of Shah Shuja assembled in Mrauk U in search of the prince.<sup>57</sup> Their purpose was to escort Shah Shuja to Pegu, hoping that he could continue his journey from there. The Arakanese guards who detected the armed followers of the prince in Mrauk U would not allow them to leave the city with their arms and armor and asked them to disarm. After having refused to disarm Shuja's soldiers battled it out with the Arakanese soldiers, seeing they were hopelessly outnumbered, they set fire to the city. The fire spread rapidly.<sup>58</sup> Schouten reported that thousands of houses, and some pagodas and temples were burned down during the blaze, which was intensified by a strong northeasterly wind. The Dutch in fact made their ships ready to depart, as the fire had spread some miles down river and their ships lay dangerously close to shore.<sup>59</sup>

The Arakanese king was so enraged by the destruction caused by the Bengali followers of Shah Shuja that he gave orders to seek out and kill the Mughal prince, but he had disappeared.<sup>60</sup> The battle in Mrauk U between Shuja's followers and the Arakanese palace guards had also caused a great panic amongst ordinary Arakanese. Schouten reported that many people thought the Mughals were about to invade. The Dutch surgeon described how on the rivers near the city he saw a steady stream of refugees flocking to the protection of Mrauk U's walls.

On 7 February 1661 the prince's whereabouts were discovered. Shah Shuja had to take flight again. Gerrit van Voorburg wrote to his superiors in Batavia that the prince fled with about 300 followers. He said that Shah Shuja and his son Zain al-din<sup>61</sup> tried to make their way to Tripura, and that his sons Buland Akhtar<sup>62</sup> and Zain al-Abedin<sup>63</sup> were captured on 15 February.<sup>64</sup> The Dutch and Muslim merchants were immediately ordered to let their ships float downriver. Neither Arakanese, nor Muslims were allowed to come near the ships for fear the prince would escape from Arakan with his treasure.<sup>65</sup> At the end of March Gerrit van Voorburg again wrote to Batavia and mentioned that the sons of Shah Shuja and most of his retinue had been found and captured. The prince himself however had not been found, and had probably been killed. The sons of Shuja had been released, his wives incorporated in the harem, and his soldiers distributed amongst the Arakanese nobility.<sup>66</sup> Van Voorburg goes on

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<sup>57</sup> Schouten has Bengalis; Gerrit van Voorburg speaks of Muslims.

<sup>58</sup> January is in the midst of the dry season.

<sup>59</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 144.

<sup>60</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 127-134 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 21 January 1661, fol. 133. Reportedly Candasudhammarja's mother asked him to reconsider the order, as she pointed out that it was unwise to teach one's soldiers how to kill a king.

<sup>61</sup> Saan Sultan according to the Dutch chief.

<sup>62</sup> Bou Sultan according to the same author.

<sup>63</sup> Calle Sultan says Gerrit van voorburg.

<sup>64</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 219-221 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1661.

<sup>65</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 146.

<sup>66</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 887-892 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 26 March 1661., fol. 887-888.

to say the Arakanese claimed Shah Shuja had planned a coup d'état. In earlier letters the same Van Voorburg had noted in connection with Shuja's disappearance, that there were large numbers of Muslims and Bengalis in Arakan, who could be of assistance to Shah Shuja.<sup>67</sup> It has to be stressed in this context that 'Muslim' and 'Bengali' are two separate but overlapping categories. There were at this time non-Bengali Muslims in Arakan, for example traders from Coromandel and Aceh, but also non-Muslim Bengalis who could be identified as either Hindu or Buddhist.<sup>68</sup>

Shah Shuja had of course been *subahdar* of Bengal since 1639 and many Bengalis in Arakan would have been taken away as slaves from areas that were considered part of the Mughal empire. A large number of these Bengalis were also Muslims like Shah Shuja. Taking into account that their former *subahdar* also brought with him a considerable sum of money, it is not hard to imagine that Shah Shuja could well have thought he was capable of winning the hearts and minds of the large Bengali population in Arakan. It is also not hard to imagine this idea might have frightened Candasudhammaraja, a king who was part of a dynasty that had not long ago itself overthrown the ruling Arakanese royal family. It should not be forgotten that Candasudhammaraja had a few years before in 1656 been very much afraid that the old royal family would come back from exile in Bengal and retake the throne. The conflict between Shah Shuja and Candasudhammaraja could therefore have turned into a conflict over the loyalties of Arakan's sizeable Bengali population.

A closer analysis of the Dutch narrative of the events in fact clearly suggests that it actually was a conflict which had developed along the lines of ethnic identities. Since the resettlement program of Narapati-kri large numbers of Bengalis had been settled in the plains of the Kaladan around the capital city Mrauk U. These Bengalis had arrived naked as slaves with nothing to eat and no work. As a result of the large influx of people, prices had risen extremely fast and as described in the two preceding Chapters recent years had witnessed high inflation. The Bengalis had moreover been settled in their own villages, headed by Bengali *talukdars*. Arakanese villages were administered by Arakanese *rwa-cas*.<sup>69</sup> The

<sup>67</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 219-221 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1661..

<sup>68</sup> Whilst referring to Shah Shuja, Schouten claimed Candasudhammaraja had a 'natural aversion for Bengalis'. Charney has denounced Schouten as a reliable source on the basis of this statement. Charney has however wrongfully connected the ethnic identity 'Bengali' with the religious identity 'Muslim'. Schouten speaks of the king's aversion against Bengalis which is improbable according to Charney because of the introduction of 'Muslim Bengalis in the royal bodyguard'. Apart from the fact that Mughal soldiers from the retinue of Shah Shuja were clearly no Bengalis, they were also not incorporated in the royal bodyguard, but distributed amongst the Arakanese nobility. The presence of Muslim ministers at the Arakanese court is cited as another reason why it is improbable that the king was not well disposed towards the Bengali population. Again Bengalis and Muslims are treated as one category by Charney, which they were not at this time. Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 144; Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>69</sup> For a description of the related Burmese system of village administration see Lieberman, *Burmese administrative cycles*, pp. 92-94. In Dutch sources '*Rosa, Rosi, or Roos*'.

resettlement of the Bengalis in Arakan had therefore created a socio-economic divide between Arakanese and Bengalis, which served to emphasize ethnic identities.

In other words, the resettlement of the Bengali population of Chittagong in the central Dhanyawati area, was instrumental in forging Arakanese and Bengali identities. These identities closely followed socio-economic differences between the two groups. The Bengalis were brought to Arakan as slaves, and were resettled in Arakan as royal service groups, or *man-kywan*. The largest part of the Arakanese population of Danyawati consisted however of common people who were mostly small farmers and fishermen.<sup>70</sup> These people would have been hit most by the sudden influx of large numbers of Bengalis, which caused sharp increases in the prices of almost everything.<sup>71</sup>

The idea that the conflict between the two rulers had evolved from a dispute over a wife or daughter of Shah Shuja should be discarded.<sup>72</sup> Schouten unequivocally states that the prince was allowed to keep his wives and children with him after he was given asylum in Arakan. It is only after his death that his wives were taken into the king's harem.<sup>73</sup> It is also not correct to say that Dutch sources present the conflict essentially as a 'Muslim and anti-Muslim' conflict.<sup>74</sup>

The death of Shah Shuja was followed by the arrival from Bengal of Mirza Ali Beg, a Mughal ambassador, in Mrauk U on 19 September 1661. The Mirza had been sent to negotiate the release of Shah Shuja's children. The Dutch company had been forced by Mir Jumla, who had been appointed *subahdar* of Bengal (June 1660–died March 1663), to send a ship from Bengal to convey the ambassador to Arakan. The ambassador brought with him 12,000 Rupees which he was planning to spend to buy the freedom of the children.<sup>75</sup> To the relief of the Dutch factors in Arakan the ambassador left empty handed on 3 December 1661. They had been very much afraid to be implicated in the conflict that now loomed between the

<sup>70</sup> For a description of the situation in Burma .M. Aung Thwin, 'Athi, Kyun.Taw, Hpayà-Kyun: Varieties of commendation and dependence in pre-colonial Burma', A. Reid ed., *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 64-89 and Lieberman, *Burmese administrative cycles*, pp. 97-109.

<sup>71</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 December 1661., fol. 899-900.

<sup>72</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 197-199; Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', pp. 228-233 and Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 303-304.

<sup>73</sup> Vide infra.

<sup>74</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 197-203. Charney does so on the basis of the faulty English rendering of the French translation of Schoutens *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 146 used by Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', p. 223. Where the Dutch text for example has *Muslim or Bengali* the text used by Siddiq Khan has only *Maure*. The fact that Schouten notes that during the fire that followed the 20 January 1661 fight between Shah Shuja's followers and the Arakanese guards some pagodas and temples were *accidentally* burned down does not mean he reports the conflict in terms of a religious conflict.

<sup>75</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1661, fol. 893-895.

Mughals and the Arakanese.<sup>76</sup> The Dutch had also felt very much threatened by mobs that had surrounded their factory after the arrival of the ambassador on one of their ships. The ships and the factory buildings had almost been set fire to by angry crowds of Arakanese that had gathered in front of the factory. The fact that Mir Jumla had claimed in his letter to the Arakanese king that the Dutch, English, Danes, and Portuguese were all his subjects, had not improved their situation.<sup>77</sup>

After the death of Shah Shuja, his children had been spared their lives and were actually released from captivity not long after the country had recovered from the unrest following the killing of the Mughal prince. The great treasure Shah Shuja had brought with him had largely eluded the king. Candasudhammaraja had been able to recover some of the Mughal prince's wealth from some of his high officials or *sit-kes* whom he had accused of colluding with Shah Shuja in his bid to take over the country. The largest part of the treasure however seemed to have been distributed by the prince amongst a great number of Arakanese subjects. This more or less confirms the idea Shah Shuja had been willing to spend his money to buy the loyalty of Arakan's Bengali population. The distribution of the treasure amongst ordinary Arakanese had created a profitable market for jewellery and gold in Arakan. The VOC merchants in Arakan asked their superiors in Batavia for large sums in cash<sup>78</sup> if they wished to buy parts of Shah Shuja's treasure<sup>79</sup> against lucrative prices.<sup>80</sup> As news of the lucrative gold and jewellery trade spread throughout the Bay of Bengal other merchants, who had not before traded to Arakan, arrived with the sole purpose of buying parts of the treasure.<sup>81</sup> In October 1663 captain Winter, an English East India Company servant acting as a private trader from Madras, arrived with a ship laden with amongst other goods 50,000 pound of iron, 2,000 pounds of tin, 400 packs of tobacco, sulphur, pepper, cloth and about 18,000 Reals of eight. Although the Englishman pretended he wanted to buy rice and slaves, which were at that moment readily available, he seems to have spent his money on gold and jewellery. The king in reaction closed the mint until the Englishman had left again for Coromandel, trying to prevent him from buying Shuja's gold and jewels.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> NA VOC 1240, fol. 216-224 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg and Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 January 1662, fol. 218. NA VOC 1232, fol. 411v. Letter from Mattheus van den Broucke to Holland, dated 19 September 1660 and NA VOC 1232, fol. 669 Letter from Mattheus van den Broucke to Holland, dated Hugli 9 December 1660.

<sup>77</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1661, fol. 894-896.

<sup>78</sup> Gerrit van Voorburg suggested sending to Arakan from Batavia for this purpose alone about 25,000 Reals of eight.

<sup>79</sup> In this case golden Rupees and gold.

<sup>80</sup> NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 November 1661, fol. 898.

<sup>81</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>82</sup> NA VOC 1242, fol. 739-754 Letter from Daniel Six, Nicholaes Boukes and Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 17 December 1663., fol. 740; *Dagh-register* vol. 1664, pp. 113-116 entry for 6 April 1664, containing the transcript of a letter from Daniel Six to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 February 1664.



#### 7.4 *The decapitation of the children of Shah Shuja*

In 1663 tensions between Arakanese and Bengalis erupted again. It seemed the three sons of Shah Shuja and their surviving retinue were at the centre of the conflict. The Dutch chief in Arakan at the time, Daniel Six, sent the *dagh-register* of the riots which was kept by VOC servants to Batavia.<sup>83</sup> The riots lasted from Wednesday 25 July 1663 to Friday 27 July 1663. Below is a summary translation of the diary:

At 10.00 o'clock in the morning our translator Louis came running into our factory with news that the king's palace was on fire. He told us that up in the city near the palace people were fighting and that he had seen many persons lying dead on the streets. He did not know what was happening, but we assumed at first that the king, who was sick, had died, and that the Arakanese nobility were fighting for the throne. The Arakanese monks and soldiers that lived near our factory on hearing the news all started running to the city. At their arrival it transpired the riots were caused by 10 to 12 Mughals from the retinue of Shah Shuja, who had set fire to the palace. They had taken the weapons of the servants of the *sit-kes* and attacked them with their own weapons. A large number of *sit-kes* had already been killed when the monks and the soldiers arrived.<sup>84</sup> The Mughals were killed by the Arakanese monks, who clubbed them to death. Large numbers of Muslims and Bengalis who lived near the palace were also killed by the monks, or at least injured and plundered. The three princes have now been thrown in prison and the *kotwal* and *rwa-ca* of the *bandel* have also been imprisoned because they are Muslims.

26 July

Today many people in boats, from settlements downstream of the *bandel*, passed our factory plundering along the way. We had to double the watch around our factory. We heard that the king's powder magazine had exploded. From a *sit-ke* we received three *ko-rans* to protect our factory. Rumours spread that tonight the Muslim *bandel* would be set on fire.

27 July

Today the plundering and looting continued. Houses of Muslims and Bengalis were targeted by mobs of Arakanese. The princes had been decapitated. The king ordered a stop to the plundering of the Muslim merchants in the *bandel*, for fear this would

<sup>83</sup> Six arrived in Arakan 26 October 1663, the diary was thus kept either by Jacob van der Plancken or Nicholaes Boukes, both of whom spoke Arakanese and had been in Arakan for a prolonged period of time. NA VOC 1246, fol. 361-388 Letter from Daniel and council to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 February 1664. In this letter Six asked Batavia to send some young company servants to Arakan who should learn Arakanese to assist Van der Plancken and Boukes and act as interpreters when they were in Dianga or elsewhere in Arakan.

<sup>84</sup> According to Arakanese chronicles quoted by Harvey the Arakanese governor of Mrauk U Manaw-thiri died during the fighting in the palace. Harvey, 'The fate of Shah Shuja', p.109.

dissuade merchants from coming to Arakan. The *kotwal* and *rwa-ca* were released from prison.

28 July

The king announced that trade should continue in the *bandel*. The daughters of Shah Shuja had been jailed and were said to be starved to death, as according to Arakanese law they were not allowed to kill women.<sup>85</sup>

29 July

Soldiers were seen returning to their homes from the city.

30 July

We went to visit the king with presents to compensate him for his losses.

31 July

The golden palace of the king has totally burned down. The bodies of the dead Mughals are floating in the moat. The king has decided to kill every person who has arrived in Arakan in the retinue of Shah Shuja, whether they had anything to do with the fire or not.<sup>86</sup> It is estimated that it will take more than 10 years to rebuild the splendid golden palace.

The diary of the riots following the attempted coup d'état by Mughal soldiers from Shah Shuja's retinue confirms tensions between on the one hand Arakanese and on the other hand Muslims and Bengalis had increased to reach boiling point. The implication of Buddhist monks in these riots could indicate that these tensions also spanned the religious divide between Muslim Bengalis and Buddhist Arakanese. The mobs that were seen coming down the river targeted Muslim and Bengali settlements. The Dutch factory was not attacked during these riots, which seems to confirm the riots were not aimed at foreigners in general.

### 7.5 The Mughal campaign against Chittagong

The killing of the sons of Shah Shuja provided Aurangzeb with a *casus belli*. The Mughal emperor sent two ambassadors to Arakan to demand the children and the treasure of his brother. The first ambassador was imprisoned and sent to the jungle as a royal slave. The second was received by the king, but as the children were dead and the treasure dispersed

<sup>85</sup> The killing of the wives and daughters of Shah Shuja is confirmed by Arakanese chronicles quoted by Harvey. Harvey, 'The fate of Shah Shuja', p.109.

<sup>86</sup> This is also confirmed by the same chronicles. Ibidem and Siddiq Khan, 'Tragedy', pp. 248-251. This should also mean that the myth of the *kamans*, or Mughal archers, who supposedly were descendants from Shah Shuja's soldiers and formed a distinct royal service group during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, should be discarded. For a description of this myth see San Baw U, 'My rambles among the ruins of the golden city of Myauk u' in *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 23 (1933), p. 19 and San Tha Aung, *Arakanese coins* trans. and ed. Aye Set 2nd ed. (Sale 1986; Distributed by M. Robinson), pp. 42-43.

throughout Arakan, or indeed already sold abroad, the demands of the emperor could not possibly be met. The Arakanese now feared war was imminent. The Dutch chief Six asked Batavia for ships to evacuate the Arakan factory. Six feared the Mughals would attack during the dry season of 1664.<sup>87</sup> The Arakanese also prepared for war. Candasudhammaraja asked Batavia to send him 42,000 pounds of sulphur. As the king's magazine had exploded he needed to produce gunpowder for his army. The amount asked for would serve to produce about 420,000 pounds of gunpowder, which would be the equivalent of what a European army of c. 40,000 to 60,000 men would use in one season.<sup>88</sup> The VOC sensed an opportunity to sell Bengal saltpetre; another component needed to produce gunpowder, but was not allowed to bring ships from Bengal into Arakanese harbours by the Arakanese king.<sup>89</sup>

In Bengal Mir Jumla had embarked on a campaign against Kuch Bihar and Assam at the end of 1661. This campaign ensured that the chances of a war between Arakan and the Mughals slowly diminished from 1661, because the Mughal army was now occupied elsewhere. Mir Jumla did however move the capital of the Bengal *subah* back to Dhaka. The move to Dhaka signalled the Mughals' intention to tighten their control over south-eastern Bengal.<sup>90</sup> The wars with Kuch Bihar and Assam ended with the rout of the Mughal army in Assam. The Bengal fleet (*nawwara*) also suffered severe losses during this campaign. The great losses the Mughal army had suffered in Assam and the death of Mir Jumla in March 1663 threw the Bengal government in great turmoil.<sup>91</sup> According to Sarkar, the Bengal administration broke down. As an illustration of the extent to which central government disappeared Sarkar cites Shihab ud-Din Talish who describes how three Mughal officials all held their own ceremonies to celebrate the end of Ramadan, each offering prayers in the emperor's name. Taxes were raised, but the imperial revenue diminished. Talish has described the interregnum after the death of Mir Jumla therefore as 'the festival of breaking the Ramadan fast' or a free for all for the Mughal officials and Bengal *zamindars*.<sup>92</sup>

Shaista Khan (1663–1688) was appointed as the next *subahdar*. He arrived in Rajmahal in March 1664. The news of his appointment fuelled fears in Arakan of an approaching Mughal attack.<sup>93</sup> Shaista Khan had been ordered to attack Arakan but the first

<sup>87</sup> NA VOC 1246, fol. 361-388 Letter from Daniel and council to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 February 1664.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Norton, *The gunner: Shewing the whole practise of artillerie: With all the appertenances thereunto belonging, together with the making of extraordinary artificiall fireworks* (London, 1628) and B.S. Hall, *Weapons and warfare in renaissance Europe* (Baltimore 1997) 43,67,72,79,88. M.A.G. de Jong, *Staat van oorlog. Wapenbedrijf en militaire hervorming in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden 1585-1621* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> *Dagh-register* vol. 1664, pp. 353, 368.

<sup>90</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 342-343.

<sup>91</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 343-350.

<sup>92</sup> Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 372.

<sup>93</sup> Sarkar has 8 March 1664 as the start of Shaista Khan's rule as *subahdar* in Bengal. Shaista Khan indeed entered Rajmahal at that date, but must have been nominated earlier as in Arakan his name was already

year of his reign he stayed put in Rajmahal. The Arakanese in 1664 thought the Mughals had only been bragging about their intentions to attack the country.<sup>94</sup> Candasudhammaraja in response ordered a full scale attack on Sandwip to bring the island back under Arakanese control. The Arakanese had lost control over Sandwip at the end of the 1640s and had never again succeeded in bringing its ruler back into the Arakanese fold.

In November 1664 the Arakanese assembled a fleet of about 30,000 men. A great storm on 18 November however prevented the departure of the fleet, and the attack had to be postponed. The storm wrecked a large number of ships at anchor near Urittaung and cost many lives. Earlier in 1664 Candasudhammaraja had also commissioned the Portuguese community in Chittagong to attack Bengal. The *Dagh-register* of Batavia reports that at the end of 1664 60 to 70 *jelias* of the Arakanese and Portuguese entered the river of Dhaka and destroyed 160 of 260 ships of the Bengal *nawwara* under the command of the great zamindar of the Dhaka area Munawwar Khan, the admiral of the Bengal flotilla. The news of this disaster apparently so angered Aurangzeb that he withdrew the allowances of Shaista Khan and his son. Aurangzeb at once ordered Shaista Khan to proceed from Rajmahal to Dhaka and to begin his attack on Arakan.<sup>95</sup> The situation became even worse when news from Dhaka reached Rajmahal that the Arakanese had attacked the area around Bhushna and taken away 2,700 or 2,800 people from there. On the river Hugli the situation also seemed to get out of hand for the Mughals, when the Arakanese started to attack European shipping. The Hugli was now infested by 10 to 12 *jelias* plundering everything they could get hold of. To the surprise of the Dutch, the Mughal officers in Bengal seemed to do nothing at all to counter the Arakanese raids. The fact that the Portuguese mercenaries also attacked Dutch shipping, disregarding the Arakanese-Dutch treaty of 1653, shows how little control the Arakanese king had over his Portuguese subjects in Chittagong. VOC officials in Bengal who tried to retrieve company property in Bengal were laughed at by the Portuguese. This was an embarrassment for Candasudhammaraja who afterwards restored the stolen goods and made promises to punish the culprits.<sup>96</sup>

The 1664 conflict was perhaps as Leider has suggested an attempt of Candasudhammaraja to take the initiative in what the Arakanese perceived to be an

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circulating in December 1663. NA VOC 1242, fol. 739-754 Letter from Daniel Six, Nicholaes Boukes and Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 17 December 1663, fol. 746 and v. And *Dagh-register* 1664 552 entry for 17 December 1664 for a report of the meeting of VOC officials and Shaista Khan in Rajmahal in April 1664.

<sup>94</sup> Six writes from Arakan that '*Den coninck van Arracan, siende datter op het swetsen van de Mooren geen gevolg quam, had een groote armade geliassen met 30000 man gereet gemaekt om het eylant Sundive, staende onder het gebiet van Bengale, te vermeesteren*'. *Dagh-register* vol. 1665, p. 99 entry for 5 May 1665 containing the transcript of a letter from Daniel Six to Batavia, dated. Arakan 12 January 1665.

<sup>95</sup> *Dagh-register* vol. 1664, p. 554 entry for 17 December 1664.

<sup>96</sup> NA VOC 1252, fol. 401-416 Letter from Daniel Six to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 January 1665, fol. 410; *Dagh-register* vol. 1664, pp. 593-594 entry for 30 December 1664.

unavoidable war with the Mughals.<sup>97</sup> It was not merely a looting expedition of a group of Portuguese mercenaries that the Arakanese scarcely could control anymore. Starting with the reign of Narapati-kri, the Arakanese had gradually lost control over the Portuguese communities in Chittagong.

After the 1664 attack on Bengal by the Portuguese from Chittagong Shaista Khan was ordered by Aurangzeb to attack that city. Adding insult to injury Candasudhammaraja after first killing the Mughal Emperor's brother, later his nephews, had commissioned the Portuguese to attack Bengal. The 1664 attack must have been a terrible affront for Aurangzeb and more importantly threatened to destabilize the Bengal economy and consequently endangered Mughal revenues. The resolution to conquer Chittagong and to remove Arakanese competition in Bengal had however more ancient roots than the 1664 conflict. After the 'conquest' of Bengal in 1574 by Akbar, the Mughals had considered Chittagong as an integral part of that province. Of course the same was true for the Arakanese kings who, at least from Man Pa's conquest of Chittagong in the 1540s, claimed to be the rightful rulers of Bengal.<sup>98</sup> The Mughal claims to authority over Chittagong can be aptly illustrated by the fact that from the sixteenth century onwards the (estimated) revenue of Chittagong was included in surveys of the Empire. From Abul Fazl's *A-in-i Akbari* of 1595 to the 1659 *Dastur al-amal-i Alamgiri* Chittagonian revenue figures always featured as if the area was already part of the Mughal Empire.<sup>99</sup> Before 1666 Bengal officials who had fallen from grace would receive rights to a part of 'the revenue of Chittagong' says Talish in the *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*.<sup>100</sup>

Shaista Khan began his preparations for the take-over of Chittagong after his arrival in Dhaka on 13 December 1664.<sup>101</sup> The *nawab* took with him an experienced team which had proved its worth in the Assam campaign under Mir Jumla. Shaista Khan appointed Muhammed Hussain as the new head of the shipbuilding factory and Muhammed Muqim was left in charge as *mushrif*, or overseer, of the new *nawwara*. Muqim had already experience with these duties during the Assam campaign.<sup>102</sup> After the defeats at the hands of the Ahoms, the Mughals had to rebuild their fleet. Talish also blames Shah Shuja for the neglect of the Bengal flotilla. The description of the Chittagong campaign in the *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* shows the enormous importance of logistics in jungle warfare. Troops fighting far away from their

<sup>97</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>98</sup> Leider, 'On Arakanese territorial expansion', pp. 131, 142-147.

<sup>99</sup> Eaton, *The rise of Islam*, pp. 198-202.

<sup>100</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 308.

<sup>101</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 137b.

<sup>102</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 138b.

initial bases were heavily dependent on long and vulnerable supply lines. If a commander lost sight of the imperative of dependable supplies a whole campaign could easily collapse. The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* provides several examples of earlier attempts at conquering Chittagong that failed just because of this lack of attention for logistics.<sup>103</sup>

Logistics and the rebuilding of the fleet were not the only aspects of Shaista Khan's battle plan. Diplomacy was perhaps the most important aspect of this campaign. Warfare at sea had never been the strongest point of the Mughal army. As the success of any operation in or against Arakan and Chittagong heavily depended on waterborne supply lines, Shaista Khan had to ensure Mughal supremacy in the waters of the Bay of Bengal. To achieve this Shaista Khan forced the Dutch to withdraw their factory from Arakan, threatening to prohibit the VOC from trading in the whole Mughal Empire if they did not cooperate.<sup>104</sup> In this way the Bengal *nawab* assured the Arakanese king would not be able to press VOC ships or gunners into his service, for the purpose of defending Chittagong. On top of this he asked the Dutch to provide him with ships to assist his army in their attack on Arakan. In Batavia the governor-general decided to postpone the decision on whether to support the Mughal by asking for an official request for help from Aurangzeb and handing over the matter to the board of the VOC in the Netherlands. The governor-general in this way tried to delay any formal intervention in the conflict until after the actual battle would have been fought. To pacify Shaista Khan they did accede to his demand to withdraw their factory from Arakan.<sup>105</sup>

At the end of January 1665 the Arakanese were still unaware of the Mughal threat that now loomed large on the borders near Chittagong. The Arakanese king still planned to attack Sandwip, but no measures had yet been taken to strengthen the frontier with Mughal Bengal. The plan to attack Sandwip was born out of the idea that the Mughals would be too weak to resist and it was not conceived as a pre-emptive strike to counter Mughal plans for invasion.<sup>106</sup> In November 1665 the departure of the VOC reminded Candasudhammaraja of the fact that perhaps this time the Mughals' plans to invade Arakan were serious. Daniel Six left Arakan with as much of the company's property he could take on 15 November 1665. The Arakanese had already suspected the Dutch had plans to withdraw, as they had received news of the arrival of a Mughal ambassador in Batavia. The Arakanese however did not stop the Dutch from leaving Arakan. The Arakanese king provided Six with a letter for Batavia expressing his surprise at the stealthy departure of the Dutch:

<sup>103</sup> Vide infra Chapter 4 for two failed Mughal invasions of Arakan.

<sup>104</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fols. 116a-116b, quoted by Sarkar, 'The conquest of Chatgaon, 1666 AD', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3.6 (1907), p. 406.

<sup>105</sup> *Dagh-register* vol. 1665, pp. 191-192.

<sup>106</sup> NA VOC 1252, fol. 401-416 Letter from Daniel Six to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 January 1665, fol. 414.

I have understood that Noromsit<sup>107</sup> [ie. the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb] has sent an ambassador to Batavia to ask for your assistance... saying that he the Patsia Moro<sup>108</sup> [the Mughal Emperor] is a bigger lord than I am, and that he can easily conquer the country of Arakan. I have heard he has threatened to banish you from his land and that you have therefore decided to leave Arakan. I had always thought that the Dutch were their own masters, but now they have become so afraid that even after the visit of a single ambassador of Noromsit they have run away from my country...Although Patsia Noromsit claims he can conquer my country I will remind you that from the time of the first Patsia they have tried to invade and they have always been repulsed by my predecessors. I assure you that the tower of Babel will fall more easily than that Patsia Noromsit will be able to conquer Arakan.<sup>109</sup>

The departure of the VOC from Arakan was very well received at the Mughal court. Aurangzeb and Shaista Khan expressed their pleasure at the willingness of the company to cooperate with them. An imperial *firman* was sent to Batavia which asked for ten to twenty ships. The Mughals promised to reimburse the costs incurred in the operation, the grant of a quarter of the territory that might be conquered (or a cash payment in lieu thereof), and an exemption in perpetuity from the payment of customs duties throughout the Mughal empire. Even if it is assumed that not all these promises would have been kept, the extravagant terms that were offered to the Dutch underscore the importance that was attached to the conquest of Chittagong and the low trust placed in the capabilities of the Mughal fleet. The council in Batavia in the end sent two vessels, the *Landsmeer* and the *Purmerland*. The vessels commanded by Johan van Leenen only arrived at Chittagong early in October 1666, long after the actual conquest of that port.<sup>110</sup> The Dutch tactics of delay had worked and the Mughals had meanwhile been able to secure naval supremacy in another way.

Shaista Khan had not only depended on VOC ships to ensure his domination of the sea. From the start of the operation he had actively sought to tempt the Portuguese *chatins* in Chittagong to betray their allegiance to Arakan and to come over to the Mughal side. The *nawab* had earlier sent Shaikh Zia al-Din Yusuf to the port of Ladhikol near Dhaka to ask the Portuguese salt traders living there to write to their compatriots in Chittagong, offering favours and money if they would take the Mughal side. The Portuguese *capitão-mor* of Hugli and the

<sup>107</sup> Nha ron ci is a term used in Arakanese chronicles to refer to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>108</sup> Patsia a corruption of *pasha*, Moro for Muslim.

<sup>109</sup> *Dagh-register* vol. 1665, pp. 406-409 entry for 13 December 1665 containing the report of Daniel Six about the withdrawal of the VOC factory in Arakan and two letters of Candassudhammaraja to the governor-general.

<sup>110</sup> Prakash, *European commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India*, p. 144. The Mughals still expressed their pleasure in a letter Shaista Khan sent to Batavia. *Dagh-register* vol. 1666-1667, p. 5858 entry for 16 October 1667.

*capitão-mor* of Tamluk were also asked to write letters to Chittagong tempting the Portuguese of that port to join the Mughal army. These attempts were successful and between 42 and 50 *jelias* with the largest part of the Portuguese community of Chittagong arrived in Noakhali (Bhalua), ready to serve the Mughals. The Portuguese advised the Mughals that with their departure there was also almost no one left to defend Chittagong. They advised Shaista Khan to act quickly to prevent the Arakanese to reinforce the city. Shaista Khan decided to start the invasion immediately. The treason of the Portuguese had given him the much longed for naval security, and thus the operation started in earnest. At the end of December 1665 Shaista Khan send his son Buzurg Ummid Khan with a relatively small force of 4,000 to 6,000 men to attack Chittagong.<sup>111</sup> The fleet only totalled 288 boats. A small army indeed if compared to the armies that had fought the epic battles of the 1620s and 1630s. According to the *Alamgirnāmah* the army was also accompanied by a son of Sirisudhammaraja, who would have been crowned king if the army had reached Mrauk U.<sup>112</sup>

Chittagong was taken after two naval engagements ended in the rout of the Arakanese fleet. The Arakanese governor of Chittagong decided to hand over the fort to the Mughals without even trying to withstand a siege. It seems the Arakanese army, which had not fought a major battle since the reign of Sirisudhammaraja, was easily surprised and overcome by the relatively small Mughal force sent to conquer Chittagong. The assertion of the Portuguese who had joined Shaista Khan that the Arakanese king had depended solely on them for the defence of his borders with the Mughal Empire therefore seems correct. The loss of Chittagong was perhaps only waiting to happen after the disastrous policy of depopulation and destruction of the area set in by Narapati-kri. The Mughals pushed on as far as Ramu, but decided Arakan was a bridge too far. Chittagong was renamed Islamabad and remained in Mughal hands until its cession to the English East India Company in 1760.

Leider has pointed to the fact that Arakanese chronicles pay little attention to the final loss of control over Chittagong in 1666.<sup>113</sup> Surprising as this may seem, the lack of prominence in these sources of this last fatal blow to Arakanese control over Bengal may well be explained by the fact that also in Arakanese historiography the real cause of the 1666 disaster was perceived to have been the fatal policies of Narapati-kri. Leider has suggested Arakanese chronicles are also remarkably silent as to the *histoire événementielle* of the last years of Candasudhammaraja's reign.

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<sup>111</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fols. 122a, 150b-159a quoted by Sarkar, 'The conquest of Chittagong', pp. 406-412. For a biography of Buzurg Ummid Khan see H. Beveridge and B. Prashad eds. and trans., *The Maathir-ul-Umara being biographies of the Muhammadan and Hindu officers of the Timurid sovereigns of India from 1500 to about 1780 A.D.* by Nawab Samsam-ud-Daula Shah Nawaz Khan and his son Abdul Hayy (Delhi: R.B. Singh, 1979).

<sup>112</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 311. a similar arrangement had been feared by the Candasudhammaraja in 1656 when Shah Shuja threatened to invade.

<sup>113</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, p. 314.



### 7.6 The end of the reign of Candasudhammaraja

The VOC returned to Arakan in September 1677. Ten years earlier Candasudhammaraja had already invited the company to return.<sup>114</sup> Trade had almost come to a standstill in Arakan in 1677. The most important merchants had either died or left and the population had become much poorer. In fact there remained only four larger merchants in Arakan. These merchants traded in cloth from Coromandel and had made contracts with the king with fixed prices for their goods, in return for which they could only buy elephants from the king.<sup>115</sup> The VOC was allowed to return on the same conditions as negotiated by Goessens in 1653. The economic breakdown also manifested itself in a debasement of the Tanka. In previous years the Tanka had been valued at 24 stivers, now its total weight had come down considerably, so that it was valued by the VOC at only 18 stivers. This was reflected in the coinage minted at Mrauk U in which the debased and lighter coins were clearly set apart from earlier Tanka with a horizontal bar in the middle of the coin.<sup>116</sup>



On the left two examples of early Candasudhammaraja Tanka (obv. and rev.) and on the right the lighter and debased Tanka coined after 1666 with the horizontal bar in the middle (obv. and rev.)<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Daghregister* vol. 1667, p. 540, entry for 12 September 1667.

<sup>115</sup> 'Het schijnt oft de negotie van oude tijden verstorven is, de principaelste coopluijden sijn overleeden en oock van hier vertrocken, de gemeene man verarmt; de beste en aensienlijksten coopluijden die noch in lefen sijn bestaan in 4 personen als den coopman Camsogerij, Assenbeek, Cameronbeeck en den vrijman Thomas Hendrik Keertekoe, welcke koopluijden Jaerlijcx haer cargasoenen van Chormandelhier krijgen bestaende meest in fijn Caleceries aen bijde sijden geschildert vande breeste sorteeringe gemeene ditos grovve geschilderde en gedrukte Chitsen bethillen van allerlij slagh en grove lijwaten diese altesaem aen den coninck en de grooten voor een vaste prijs (daer van sij contract hebben gemaect) weten te leveren doch sij sijn gehouden haer betaelingen in eliphanten 't ontfangen, tot wat prijsen sij haer goederen als geseijt leveren hebben, wat divoiren daer toe aengewent sijn, noch niet connen vernemen'. NA VOC 1339, fol. 918-924 Letter from Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 January 1678, fol. 920-921v.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchiner, *Land of water*, p. 142. First issues of Candasudhammaraja that are found today weigh in at between 10 to 10.3 gm, later coinage weigh between 7 and 8 gm.

<sup>117</sup> Photos from Mitchiner, *Land of water*, p. 142. Inscriptions read: *Lord of the Golden Palace, Candasudhammaraja*. All coins are dated 1014 B.E [A.D. 1652], the start of the king's reign. These dates in

As a result of the 1640s campaigns by Narapati-kri the importance of Chittagong as a centre for industry and commerce had been destroyed. Inflation had gripped the Arakanese economy, ultimately leading to the debasement of its coinage after 1666. Plans to resettle the weavers and other craftsmen in Arakan had not had the desired effect. In fact Arakan and Chittagong became importers of coarse cotton cloth from Coromandel. The flow of substantial royal revenues from Chittagong to Mrauk U had gradually diminished from 1645 on and came to a complete halt in 1666. The whole redistributive network that had been built upon the distribution by the Arakanese kings of these revenues slowly fell apart, beginning with the reign of Narapati-kri. Seen from this point of view the eventual fall of Chittagong in 1666 was no more than the final blow to the Arakanese state.

The years from 1670 until the death of Candasudhammaraja in 1684 already showed signs of the upheavals that would grip the Arakanese kingdom at the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In 1670 a son of Candasudhammaraja, who was curiously appointed governor of Chittagong, rebelled against his father. At the same time another son, Ugga Balla, who was to become *ein-shei-min* in 1672 and would later succeed Candasudhammaraja, became a monk. The retreat of this prince into a monastery could well be associated with the unstable political situation. The revolt was unsuccessful and the king's son died as a result. According to Leider all this points to a growing factional strife at the court.<sup>118</sup> On 27 February 1678 a large fire in Mrauk U destroyed the Golden Palace and about 3,000 to 4,000 houses. The fire killed 4,000 to 5,000 people including the 14 year old daughter of the king, who himself narrowly escaped death. On 2 May 1678 the palace of the mother of the king burned down, 20 May the palace of the daughter of the king, and on 5 June the cloth market was set on fire.<sup>119</sup> It seems that these fires, that appear to have been targeted at the royal palace and the other houses of the royal family, can well be seen as foreshadowing the civil war that would soon rage throughout the country.

Candasudhammaraja's health also deteriorated during these years. The VOC chief in Arakan Dirk Vonck feared that the kingdom would be torn apart by a civil war after the king's death. He said that although the king had nominated his son Ugga Balla as *ein-shei-min*, it seemed the *Sit-kes* were in favour of the king's brother.<sup>120</sup>

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general do not correspond with the date of minting as Arakanese coins were generally stamped with the date the king ascended the throne. For the exceptions of coinage of Sirisudhammaraja and Satuidhammaraja vide infra.

<sup>118</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 316-317.

<sup>119</sup> NA VOC 1339, fol. 940-941 Letter from Balthazar Hinlopen and Jan Heijnen to Batavia, dated Arakan 4 March 1678 and NA VOC 1339, fol. 941v-944v. Letter from Balthazar Hinlopen and Jan Heijnen to Batavia, dated Arakan 15 December 1678.

<sup>120</sup> *Den Arrakansen coning was doorgaans onpasselyck en somwylen buyten hoop van reconvalisatie, hebben synen soone, alhoewel nog een kint, tot synen successeur voorgesteld, wesende van een seer wreeden en gierige nature. Ondertusschen speelden de grooten lustig hare personagie en wierd vermeent dat by overlyden des Conings wel een verwarring in't ryck mocht komen te ontstaan aangesien veel dese Conings broeder*

The VOC decided to remove the factory from Arakan on 14 September 1682.<sup>121</sup> The main reason was that trade had come to a virtual standstill in Arakan. The only thing that could be bought in Arakan was rice or elephants, both could only be obtained with cash. Goods could not be sold due to the absence of larger merchants. The VOC decided it could just as well send only one or two ships each year with silver money to buy rice if needed. The Arakanese population had become very poor by 1682 and trading goods from Coromandel or other parts of Asia was not an option anymore.<sup>122</sup> In 1683 Candasudhammaraja set fire to his own palace, he died in 1684. He was succeeded by Ugga Balla who ruled only eleven months from 1684 to 1685.

### 7.7 Ugga Balla and Waradhammaraja

Ugga Balla (1684-1685) was still very young when he ascended the throne. He left Mrauk U to build a new palace on the site of an old Arakanese capital of the Lemro era<sup>123</sup> at Khrip. As Candasudhammaraja had set fire to the palace in 1683, he needed to build a new palace anyway, but it is unclear why he decided to move away from Mrauk U

The fears Vonck entertained about an impending civil war after the death of Candasudhammaraja would soon become reality. Ugga Balla was soon challenged by his uncle, the governor of Sandoway. In October 1684 the uncle sailed up the Kaladan to confront Ugga Balla. It is unclear what the result of this expedition was, but in some chronicles the same uncle is still an important figure during the reign of Waradhammaraja (1685-1692), who succeeded Ugga Balla after his death in April 1685. The death of Ugga Balla was followed by a bloody revolt of the palace guards. The guards invaded the palace at Khrip, killed the princesses, concubines and ministers. They also plundered the royal treasures and took many people as their slaves.<sup>124</sup> The rebellion of the palace guards marks the start of a state of civil war that would grip Arakan for more than twenty years. The expedition the English East India Company sent out in search of a new place for their Bengal factory in 1689 found the country in chaos.<sup>125</sup> The loss of Chittagong and its revenues had

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*toegedaan waaren. Dagh-register* vol. 1682 entry for 4 June 1682, pp. 704-705 containing summary transcripts of several letters of Dirk Vonck to Batavia, dated 29 December 1681, 4 April, 3 and 15 May and 13 August 1682.

<sup>121</sup> *Dagh-register*, vol. 1682 entry for 14 September 1682, pp. 1113.

<sup>122</sup> According to Arasaratanm because of the competition of Muslim merchants from Coromandel see *Generale missiven*, pp 4:388, 559 and Arasaratnam, *Merchants, companies and commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 144.

<sup>123</sup> Arakanese capitals were situated in the Lemro valley between the 11th century and 1430 AD.

<sup>124</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 317-319

<sup>125</sup> *A Copie of a Journall of our voyage from Bengal to Madras commencing on 8 November 1688, concluding on 3 march 1689 with letters received from and concerning Captain William Heath's transactions in ye. Right Honourable Companies affaires.* BL Mss. Egerton 283; BL OIOC Original Correspondence E/3/47, fol. 231-233; *Records of Fort St. George. Diary and Consultation book 1689* (Madras 1910) 19, 24.

deprived Mrauk U and its ruler of their role as distributors of a considerable source of wealth. It is not surprising that as a result Arakan rapidly disintegrated when the last king that had nominally controlled Chittagong died. Waradhammaraja soon became a puppet in the hands of the palace guards. The country was constantly being rocked by bloody internal struggles. Waradhammaraja tried in vain to re-establish his authority with the help of a force of Buddhist monks recruited from Mrauk U itself. When this attempt failed the palace guards started persecuting the monks throughout the country. Seeing the state the economy was in this is not surprising as the royal family from the reign of Narapati-kri had donated extremely large amounts of money to the *sasana*. Waradhammaraja was dethroned by the palace guards in 1692, without having ever exercised any real authority in Arakan. He was succeeded by a succession of six kings, who all remained puppets in the hands of the palace guards. The kingdom meanwhile disintegrated. Central authority collapsed and it seems that the regions comprising the Arakanese kingdom slowly regained their autonomy.<sup>126</sup> The Mrauk U kingdom finally collapsed after the reign of Waradhammaraja (1685-1692). When the VOC visited Arakan again at the end of the seventeenth century the governor-general and council in Batavia reported to their superiors in the Dutch Republic in 1699:

The situation in the Arakanese kingdom is terrible because of civil war and high prices. The rivers and roads are clogged by corpses of people having died from famine. In three years the Arakanese have had four kings, three of whom have been killed by the commoners.<sup>127</sup>

### *Conclusion*

At the start of the reign of Candasudhammaraja the Arakanese grip on local communities in Chittagong had already been weakened. The Mrauk U kingdom still controlled parts of south-eastern Bengal in the 1650s, but the campaigns of the Mughal prince Shah Shuja would put an end to Arakanese influence in this part of Bengal. In 1656 and 1657 Shah Shuja moved

<sup>126</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 320-321.

<sup>127</sup> 'De saacken in het Arracanse ryck door oorlog en duuren tyd in seer erbermylycke staat ende rievier en weeghen nauwelyks bruyckbaer door de meenighte van lycken door hongersnoot omgekoomen synde. Men heeft daar in drie jaaren vier koningen gehad waarvan de gemeente drie verstooten en om't leeven hadde gebracht.' Generale Missive, dated 10 February 1699. *Generale Missiven*, p. 6:58. The kings being: Candasuriyadhammaraja (1694-1696), Noratha (child king reigned only a few days in 1696), Maruppiya (1696-1697), Kalagandhat (1697-1698), and Naradhipati (1698-1700). The Dutch had come back to Arakan to transport monks from Arakan to Sri Lanka as requested by the king of Kandy. *Generale Missiven*, pp. 5:642, 769, 852; 6:8, 442. See also D.B Jayatilaka., 'Sinhalese embassies to Arakan' *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35 (1940), pp. 1-6. Jinadasa Liyanaradne, 'Notices sur une lettre royale Singhalese de 18e siècle, conservée au musée de l'homme a Paris', *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 73 (1984), pp. 273-284 and L.J. Wagenaar, 'Looking for monks from Arakan, a chapter of the Kandyan-Dutch relations in the 18th century', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* 47 (2003), pp. 91-110.

against south-eastern Bengal and re-established Mughal control over Dhaka. The flight of Shah Shuja to Arakan following the war of succession in the Mughal empire eventually led to the Mughal invasion of Chittagong in 1666. The substantial revenues from south-eastern Bengal and Chittagong now ceased to flow into Arakanese coffers. In the period that followed the Arakanese kingdom derived its income mainly from the rice trade. The departure of the VOC meant that the king again lost a large part of his income and redistributive powers, as with the VOC also other large merchants left, and the connection with Coromandel was also largely severed. From the reign of Ugga Balla the kingdom descended into anarchy from which it was only to recover briefly in the mid eighteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century the country lost its independence and was incorporated in the Burmese empire.<sup>128</sup>

In just under a hundred years the Mughals succeeded in bringing Bengal under their authority. The impact of this war on the Bengal economy was significant. The centre of gravity of the Bengal economy shifted from the southeast to the northwest. Incessant warfare between Arakan and Mughal India destroyed the economic centre of Bengal around and south of Dhaka. It also rendered Chittagong, geographically speaking the best seaport for all Bengal, useless as an entrepôt. The uncertainties of war drove the large European trading companies far into the Bengal interior to places such as Hugli and Calcutta away from the main zones of combat.

In the next Chapter the economic backgrounds of the Mrauk U kingdom will be analyzed. The incomes derived from trade will be compared with tax incomes resulting from the control over south-eastern Bengal.

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<sup>128</sup> See for an admittedly British imperial perspective on Arakan's decline at the end of the eighteenth century Major R.E. Roberts, 'An account of Arakan written at Islaàmabad (Chittagong) in June 1777', *The Asiatic Annual Register or a view of the history of Hindustan and of the politics, commerce and literature of Asia for the year 1799* (London, 1800), ed. and repr. J. Leider, 'Présentation et commentaire', *Aséanie* 3 (1999), pp. 125-149. A slightly different version is [Roberts, Major R.E.], 'History of the Mugs, people of Arracan, June 1777'. BL Mss. Add. 29,210 (2), fol. 51 – 69.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TRADE AND TAXATION

In describing the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom one of the central themes of the previous Chapters has been the Ninety Years' War (c. 1574-1666) between the Arakanese and the Mughals over south-eastern Bengal. In this Chapter some aspects of the economic history of the Arakan-Bengal continuum will be reviewed that help us to understand the underlying dynamics of the expansion and the subsequent fragmentation of the Arakanese kingdom. It will be argued that the control over south-eastern Bengal, the economic centre of Bengal from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, was the cork on which the Arakanese kingdom thrived. A comparison will be made of the effects of incomes from trade and tax revenues from Bengal on the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom.

From an Arakanese perspective it has until now been assumed that revenues from trade were essential for the rise to power of the Arakanese kings. Maurice Collis, San Shwe Bu, D.G.E. Hall, Michael Charney and Jacques Leider all have suggested that trade provided the Arakanese kings with revenues that enabled them to first expand and later consolidate their hold over other local centres in the Arakanese littoral and which were also an important instrument in the expansion of the Arakanese kingdom.<sup>1</sup> These assumptions have been based on a more or less superficial understanding of the mechanisms of Arakanese trade and taxation. In fact when viewed in terms of the commerce in the Bay of Bengal as a whole Arakanese trade always was a rather limited affair. To be able to assess the importance of revenues from trade vis-à-vis land revenues from Bengal the following paragraphs provide a more detailed analysis of the development of trade and taxation in Arakan during the seventeenth century.

In the first Chapter the economic geography of Chittagong and Mrauk U has been analyzed and both cities have been compared. The conclusion of this comparison between Mrauk U and Chittagong was that, while in a local Arakanese perspective Mrauk U certainly had specific advantages over other local centres, but in a regional context the port of Chittagong was far more successful in attracting long-distance trade and was of strategic importance for anyone wishing to control south-eastern Bengal. The possession of Chittagong and its

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<sup>1</sup> Charney, 'Rise of a mainland trading state', pp. 1-4; Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 417-418; Maurice Collis and San Shwe Bu, 'Arakan's place in the civilization of the Bay: a study of coinage and foreign relations', *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15.1 (1925), pp. 34-51; Hall, 'Studies in Dutch relations', pp. 1-31.

revenues was in this respect extremely important for the Mrauk U kings if they wanted to keep their advantage in the redistributive networks that formed the Arakanese state. Revenues from south-eastern Bengal flowed directly into the hands of the Mrauk U rulers enabling them to sustain large armies and to build strong alliances.

### *8.1 Trade in the Arakan-Bengal continuum*

The central role of Chittagong in Bay of Bengal trade was illustrated when in 1608 the VOC sent a trading mission to Arakan to discover the trade of Bengal. The Arakanese king Man Raja-kri offered the harbour of Dianga near Chittagong to the VOC. Man Raja-kri suggested the company should make a fortress at Dianga for the protection of merchants. In 1616 after the Arakanese king Man Khamaung had removed Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao from Sandwip he told the Dutch company how during the early years of the seventeenth century Manuel de Mattos had succeeded in generating a tax revenue at Dianga of 20,000 Tanka.<sup>2</sup> The Arakanese kings thus hoped to employ Dutch naval strength to protect trade in the Arakan-Bengal continuum and to enhance their own income from tax. Arakanese promises of a profitable trade in this part of the Bay of Bengal prompted several investigations by the Dutch company into the nature of trade in the Bay of Bengal. Two special reports concerning this trade were eventually produced, one written in 1608, the other in 1614.<sup>3</sup> Both reports provide an overview of the trade in this part of the Indian Ocean during the early seventeenth century. It is interesting to note what Cortenhoeff, the author of the 1614 report had to say about trade in eastern Bengal:

The city of Chattigam [Chittagong], where this king [Man Raja-kri] has a fortress, lies at about 22 degrees north. [Chittagong] is situated next to Diango [Dianga] Bouduschreeve [not identified]. The cities Saxsala [not identified], Romour [Ramu] and Sijckeraij [Cukkara on the Matamuhuri river]. All these places are situated east of the river Ganges along the coast in the direction of Arakan. Bolwa [Bhalua] lies west of Chittagong. People say that the king of Arakan has again recovered this place from Achabar [Akbar sic.].

Dianga is separated by a small river from the mainland and the government of

<sup>2</sup> NA VOC 1061, Letter from Cortenhoeff to the chamber Amsterdam, dated Masulipatnam 25 April 1616, fol. 192r.

<sup>3</sup> NA VOC 1055 n.f. Report on the Bay of Bengal and Arakan by Pieter Willemsz., dated Masulipatnam 25 May 1608 printed as Pieter Willemsz., 'Informatie van de Bochte van Bengala en de Arracan gedaen door Pieter Willemsz. in Masulipatnam desen 25 Maij Anno 1608', J.K.J. de Jonge, *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indië* (1595-1610) 16 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1862-1909), pp. 3:287-291. and NA VOC 1059 Cortenhoeff, Short note on Diango and other places in Bengal, n.d. [1614], fol. 107.

Saxsala. It has been praised and offered to us as a perfect place for conducting trade in Bengal. The Mogolleessen from the land of Achabar [Mughals from the land of Akbar] also come to Dianga to trade. Dianga is situated within sight of Chittagong and in a straight line would be two hours sailing from Chittagong, the journey however takes three-quarters of day via the river and the sea across the broken land of the delta. [...] From Arakan ships with a draft of two or three fathom can sail to Dianga in three days. [...]

#### Goods to be had at Dianga

Catsecilles, Cassis, t'Chantaers, Bethielles Gramsont and a lot of other types of cloth from Bengal<sup>4</sup>, silk cloth and the like, red lacquer, long white pepper, wax, sugar, rosewater, grains, arak, rice, butter, oil and an innumerable amount of other provisions. Indigo is plentiful, and of a better quality than that of Arakan. It is hoped that the indigo of Agra will be brought to market at Dianga after news will have reached the Mughals that the VOC has opened a factory there.

#### Goods to be shipped to Dianga

Gold, rubies and lesser precious stones, like roughly cut emeralds are brought by the local Portuguese. Reals of Eight, tin, steel, red and other nicely coloured cloth, all kinds of porcelain, spices and sandalwood. The shells named cowries brought from the green Maldives and Ceylon are current as payment and give a good profit. Tintenago, wanted by the Mughals in Bengal and traded to India.

The 1608 report by Willemsz is similar while adding that most of the finer cloth is produced in Sripur and Sonargaon and that those are also brought to markets in the Chittagong area. The Sripur area was in fact the economic heart of Bengal. It is striking that early in the seventeenth century the VOC identified Chittagong as the port which they wanted to use as a base for trading with Bengal and places as far into the interior of India such as Agra and Lahore. Surprising as this may seem, accustomed as historians are today to the success of European trading companies operating from their factories on the river Hugli in the eighteenth century, it is certainly an anachronism to identify the Hugli as the centre of the Bengal economy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> The superiority of south-eastern Bengal ports over those situated on the Hugli is clearly expressed by Johan van Leenen in his report of the survey of the Bay of Bengal from the Kaladan to the Brahmaputra in 1666. Van

<sup>4</sup> See Dijk, 'Seventeenth century Burma' vol. 2 appendix 6 for an excellent overview of various types of cloth produced and traded in the Bay of Bengal in the seventeenth century.

<sup>5</sup> The Hugli was of course the best place to access the Bihar market for saltpetre and opium.



Leenen concluded that Dhaka and Chittagong were far better situated to exploit the commerce of Bengal than the ports on the river Hugli. He observed that Dhaka possessed much better inland connections than the ports on the western branches of the Ganges and was also much easier reached from the Bay of Bengal from a port such as Chittagong.<sup>6</sup> The only reason in fact that forced the European trading companies, and of course indigenous merchants as well, to settle at the Hugli was the incessant warfare between Arakan and the Mughals over south-eastern Bengal, a war that was fought to control the economic centre of sixteenth and seventeenth century Bengal. The settlement of the European companies on the Hugli was thus a necessity and not because this was from the very beginning near the economic centre of Bengal. The Ninety Years' war between Arakan and Bengal prohibited those traders from settling at the most convenient spot, Chittagong.

In the following paragraphs Arakanese trade will be analyzed with a view to compare possible revenues from trade with the income derived from Bengal. It will be argued that Arakan itself only permitted a small scale trade, augmented by the slave trade, but put crudely this was just another kind of revenue from Bengal. The rice trade was the central pillar of the Arakanese economy and will be discussed first. The extremely low price of rice in Arakan should, apart from the favourable climate, also be attributed to the use of slave labour.

### 8.2 *The development of the Arakanese trade during the 17<sup>th</sup> century*

Tomé Pires noted in 1515 that Arakan had a good harbour visited by Kling merchants from the South of India, Bengalis and Mon, but that its trade was rather insignificant.<sup>7</sup> It should be assumed that Muslim merchants from India had visited Arakan since the fourteenth century. From the reign of king Man Raja in 1518 Arakanese kings are seen to actively promote commerce. Man Raja in 1518 sent a letter to the king of Portugal inviting Portuguese traders

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<sup>6</sup> NA VOC 1264, fol. 328-336 Report of Johan van Leenen, commander of the ships *Landsmeer* and *Purmerland* in aid of the king of Hindostan in his war against Arakan, dated Batavia 2 July 1667., fol. 332v. '*Langs dit gewenste vaerwater, dan Edele heeren, connen de goederen en coopmanz. van de Comp. seer bequaemel. naer Decaa en Ouglyse Ganges af en aan gevoert werden, ende verseeckeren wy Ueds dat sulckx niet alleen vry voorspoediger, maer oock met minder moeyte en gevaer als langs den wegh der sout barcken steeds sal connen geschieden ende om weclke redenen benevens alle de vooraangehaelde ick oordeelen moet, niet als seer wel te hebben gedaen, dat den wech van Decaa naer Ougly door see ben gevaeren, ende alsoo sal nu volgens ueds goed concept begrepen in voorgemelt. haer eds papieren het middel syn uytgevonden om niet allen den Tessindiansen zuyccker, die met weinigh onkosten een wech van 2 a 3 dagen voor stroom to Decca int laetste van september can gebracht werden, te bevryden, van soo veel molesten pericul en swaere ongelden als men jaerlykcx int afbrengen van deselve naer Ougly siet geschieden, maer oock behalven dat wy hebben doen sien hoe de vaert van Arracan op Setigam met groot ende cleyn vaertuyg soo wel is te gebruicken, soo sal de negotie tot Decca connen vry syn behalven van de moeilyckheden die dese onderworpen is, noch van soo veele onkosten die nu met t af en aanbrengen vande goederen op de binnenwateren moeten gedaen werden.*'

<sup>7</sup> A. Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o livro de Francisco Rodrigues* (Coimbra, 1978), pp. 228, n. 176 quoted in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 419.

to Arakan and offering them security.<sup>8</sup> It is however only from the reign of king Man Pa in the middle of the sixteenth century that Arakanese chronicles mention the arrival of large numbers of merchants in Arakan. Man Pa is credited with the creation of a class of guards for the protection of foreign traders and digging tanks with fresh water for the use of these merchants.<sup>9</sup> With arrival of groups of Portuguese merchants in the Bay of Bengal in the second half of the sixteenth century more information on Arakanese trade becomes available. The introduction of the *carreiras* system by the *Estado da Índia* in 1518 permitted one annual voyage to Chittagong. Four out of sixteen *carreira* voyages allowed by Martim Afonso de Sousa (1542-1545) were destined for Bengal. According to Subrahmanyam those voyages all headed for Chittagong.<sup>10</sup>

Arakanese trade can be said to have extended southwards from the Maldives, to the Coromandel coast and Bengal, northwards across the Arakan Yoma to Burma and eastwards to Melaka and Aceh.<sup>11</sup> In the Maldives rice was exchanged for cowries, shells used as currency in Arakan. Trade with the ports on the Coromandel coast focussed on the exchange of rice and elephants for high quality cloth, red yarn, iron, steel, tobacco, and a small number of other goods. Bengal was a partner for trading foodstuffs and silver which were exchanged for saltpetre, opium, high quality cloth, salt and butter. Burma was a trading partner from where rubies and other precious stones were obtained in exchange for rice and re-exported cloth. Trade with Tenasserim, Melaka and Aceh consisted of rice exports for which in exchange sulphur, pepper, lead, tin, and Chinaware was procured. Arakan's trade clearly reflected the fact that the basis of the Arakanese economy always was rice cultivation.<sup>12</sup> Trade with Coromandel and the VOC exceeded the other commercial contacts by far. Cowries were only imported when there were shortages and commercial contacts with Melaka and Aceh were also sporadic. Trade with Bengal mainly concentrated itself in Chittagong and as a consequence of the Ninety Years' war with the Mughals Bengal exports were diverted to ports on the Hugli.

From the first decades of the seventeenth century the VOC encountered fierce competition from Muslim merchants from Coromandel in Arakan. During the whole seventeenth century traders from Coromandel would be the only noticeable group of foreign merchants in Mrauk U apart from the VOC and private Portuguese and Dutch traders. The competition of the

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<sup>8</sup> Bouchon, *Voyage*, pp. 362-363.

<sup>9</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 429.

<sup>10</sup> Leider quoting Subrahmanyam in Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 420.

<sup>11</sup> NA VOC 1062, fol. 37-38 Letter from Samuel Kindt to the chamber Amsterdam, dated Masulipatnam, 12 June 1615.

<sup>12</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 417.

Coromandel merchants forced the VOC to abandon the idea of importing high quality cloth from Coromandel in Arakan.<sup>13</sup> The huge profits of the elephant trade enabled the Coromandel merchants to sell, if needed, their goods at considerable losses in Arakan.<sup>14</sup> The idea to use the Coromandel trade to buy rice and slaves only surfaced again briefly in the 1660s, and was not put into operation because of the departure of the VOC from Arakan in 1665. The trade between Coromandel and Arakan remained firmly in the hands of Indian merchants throughout the seventeenth century. Haji Baba, Achyutappa Chetti and Chinnana Chetti are the most prominent examples of such merchants.<sup>15</sup> The decline of commerce between the two regions at the end of the seventeenth century was not caused by competition from VOC or other European trading companies, but was the result of the gradual collapse of the Arakanese state after the loss of control over Chittagong from the mid 1640s, which severely undermined Arakanese spending power. It was therefore the growth and expansion of the Mughal empire that primarily influenced the slow decline of trade between Arakan and Coromandel.

Although Arakanese kings from the early sixteenth century actively fostered trade to enhance their own incomes, Sirisudhammaraja is the first Arakanese king known to have operated as a merchant himself. To the marked surprise of the Dutch this king started sending his own ships to Coromandel in 1628.<sup>16</sup> Almost a decade later also the chief queen of Sirisudhammaraja, Nat Shin May, is reported to have sent her own ships to Coromandel.<sup>17</sup> The trade of the king mainly centred on the sale of elephants to Coromandel. It seems the king received elephants as a form of taxation in kind or tribute from tribes living in the hills and sold them either via his own agents in Coromandel or to foreign merchants in Arakan who would export them to Coromandel.<sup>18</sup> The elephant trade would be one of the mainstays of the Arakan-Coromandel trade during the seventeenth century. Elephants would sell against high prices in Coromandel,

<sup>13</sup> NA VOC 1084, fol. 166-168 Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to the chamber Amsterdam, dated Pulicat 28 April 1625., fol. 167r.

<sup>14</sup> NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640.

<sup>15</sup> Haji Baba operated from Arakan at least from 1608 to 1623. NA VOC 1055 Letters and papers from Atjeh n.f. nr. 1 Letter from Jan Gerritsz Ruyl on board the ship of Moluque Tujar to the next VOC representative arriving in Arakan, dated Arakan 27 March 1608; NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck to Coromandel, dated Arakan 12 February 1615; NA VOC 1083, fol. 188-190 Letter from Hendrik Lambrechts to Coromandel, dated Arakan 5 December 1623.

<sup>16</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1350-1352 Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Pulicat 30 July 1628. Subrahmanyam, *The political economy of commerce. Southern India 1500-1650* (Cambridge, 1990) p. 307.

<sup>17</sup> NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637. NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated November 1638.

<sup>18</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp 7:1435-1438 Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 24 September 1628. *Dagh-register* 1641-1642, p. 145 entry for 1 May 1642 containing a letter from Lunnenburgh to Batavia, dated Arakan 2 March 1642.

giving profits of between 100 to 500%.<sup>19</sup> An animal bought in Arakan for 1,300 or 1,400 Tanka would in Coromandel fetch the same amount in Pagodas, i.e. five times as much.<sup>20</sup> Arakanese ships could carry as many as 14 animals at a time.<sup>21</sup> From the start it seems that Sirisudhammaraja used Achyutappa Chetti as his agent in Masulipatnam.<sup>22</sup> Achyutappa Chetti was the chief broker of the VOC in Coromandel and he and his brother Chinanna Chetti would become the most important merchants operating on the Coromandel-Arakan trade.<sup>23</sup> Chinanna Chetti had his own agent, a certain Vinquetadre Chetti, in Arakan.<sup>24</sup> In 1641 Chinanna Chetti in company with the Arakanese king Narapati-kri shipped as many as 14 elephants to Coromandel. This was an exceptional shipment; usually not more than 6 animals would be shipped each season.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century not more than between one to three voyages would be made between Arakan and Coromandel each year.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640.

<sup>20</sup> The Tanka valued at 24 stivers and the Pagoda at 120 stivers. Pagoda value from Dijk, *Seventeenth century Burma* 2.135.

<sup>21</sup> NA VOC 1159, fol. 369-383 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1645; *Dagh-register* 1640-1641, pp. 166-170 entry for 24 January 1641. *Dagh-register* 1640-1641 322.

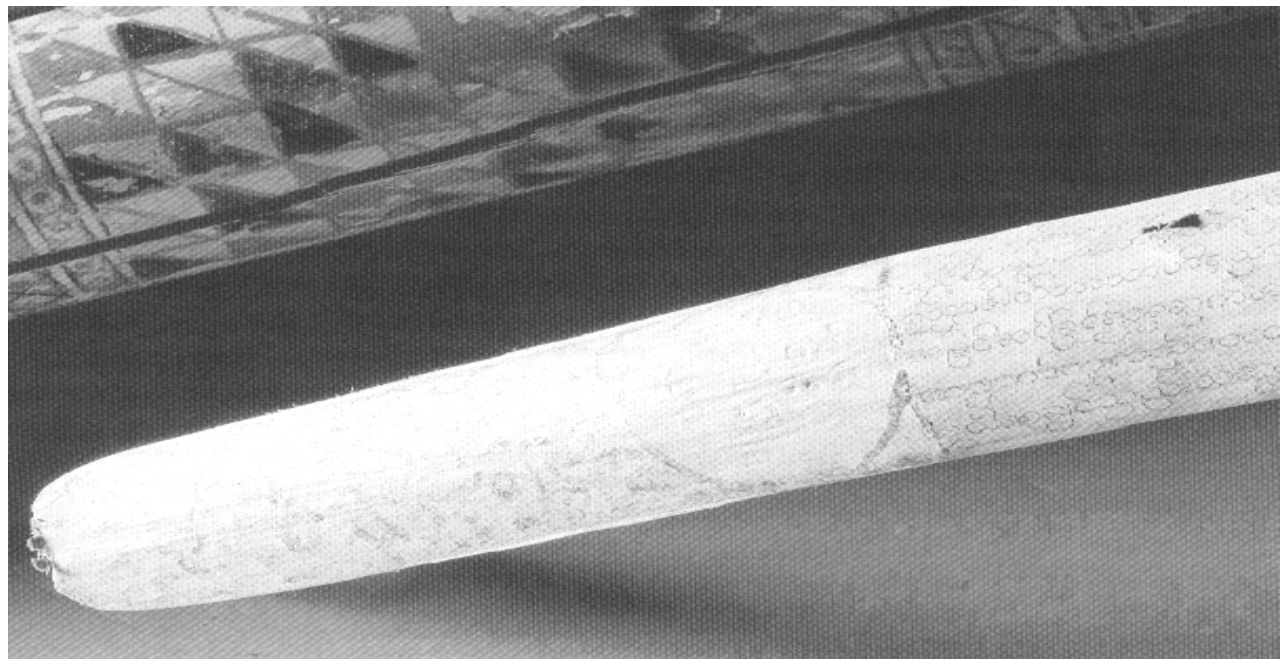
<sup>22</sup> NA VOC 1098, fol. 494 Letter from Sirisudhammaraja to Marten IJsbrantsz in Pulicat, dated Arakan 19 April 1629.

<sup>23</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Political economy of commerce*, pp. 62, 300-314.

<sup>24</sup> NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638; NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640. NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643 631.

<sup>25</sup> *Dagh-register* 1640-1641, pp. 166-170 entry for 24 January 1641. *Dagh-register* 1640-1641 322, 419. Diary of Van den Helm 1645 entry for 11 March.

<sup>26</sup> Based on calculations from the VOC's Arakan papers and Subrahmanyam, *Political economy of commerce*, pp. 214, 311.



Written reminders of seventeenth century trade between Arakan and the Coromandel coast: Top: a letter from king Candasudhammaraja to the Armenian merchant Jeorge Christiano in Chennai in Persian with its original envelope and seal in Arakanese, dated 20 September 1679. The seal reads: *raja dhippati rhwe nan sa khan*, or 'Supreme Lord, Master of the Golden Palace'. Bottom, letter from king Candavijayaraja to the same merchant, this time in Arakanese dated 21 February 1718. Top: cloth jacket with seal of Candasudhammaraja, bottom: palm leaf letter in Arakanese with bamboo casket.

The goods brought from across the Bay of Bengal were bought in Arakan by petty traders. In Arakan the VOC had to sell its goods in small quantities. Adam van der Mandere remarked that due to the absence of large merchants he had to sell goods in small portions of between 4 and 10 Tanka. Van der Mandere observed that there were no merchants with more than 200 Tanka in cash in Arakan. He advised Batavia to bring to Arakan only silver, preferably in the form of *reals of eight*.<sup>27</sup>

### 8.3 Rice trade

The abundance of rice in Arakan was an important reason for the VOC to come to Arakan. In 1656 Batavia reminded its factors in Arakan that they had not received rice from Java in 6 to 12 months and expected Arakan to supply as much rice as could be obtained to 'feed this large body'. Over the years the unpredictable supply of rice to Batavia from Javanese fields would be the main factor behind the Dutch presence in Arakan.<sup>28</sup>

Paddy, or rice in the husk, was harvested usually from November onwards, and new rice was available on the market between December and February. As paddy has about twice the volume of rice, the VOC usually preferred rice to paddy.<sup>29</sup> Old rice, usually termed black or brown rice, was occasionally bought to produce arrack in Batavia.<sup>30</sup> Rice was procured by the VOC in a variety of ways. Rice could be bought from the royal granaries, or direct from farmers living in the Kaladan valley or around Chittagong. The king received a part of his income from taxation in kind. Rice was one of the agrarian products the king's subjects had to provide to the king as part of the Arakanese taxation system.<sup>31</sup> In January 1637 for example the king received 300 to 400 boats loaded with rice from Chittagong.<sup>32</sup> Unlike other products liable to taxation in kind such as cane and bamboo, the rice tax had a special function.<sup>33</sup> In

<sup>27</sup> *Alhier en connen geen waeren profitelyc aenden man gebrocht werden alsoo hier geen coopluysden syn die voor 200 Tangen contant connen coopen soo dat alhier geen beeter couranter waere en syn dan Realen van 8en. Eenige waeren vercoopende moeten de selven uitborgen ende met cleyne beetjes van 4,5 tot 7 en 10 tangen ontfangen met veel moyten dat een meserie is*. NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638, fol. 293.

<sup>28</sup> *dat den rys hier doorgaens schaers omkomt, ende ons in groote quantiteyt van andere plaetsen dient te werden versocht, om dit groote lichaem te spysighen ende niet verleegen te vallen*. NA VOC 880, fol. 459-462 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 22 July 1656, see also NA VOC 881, fol. 395-401 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 20 August 1657; NA VOC 881, fol. 534-536 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 30 October 1657.

<sup>29</sup> NA VOC 866, fol. 299-303 Letter from Batavia to Arent van der Helm, dated Batavia 31 May 1642.

<sup>30</sup> NA VOC 857, fol. 492-496 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 16 August 1635.

<sup>31</sup> See Leider, 'Taxation et groupes de service sous la royauté arakanaise. Un rapport d'enquête de 1803 dans un manuscrit birman de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris', *Aséanie* 1 (1998), pp. 67-89. For a translation and introduction to the *cac kham khyak* [revenue inquest of Dhanyawati] of 1803 by Na On.

<sup>32</sup> These boats were named *Banrijs*. NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637.

<sup>33</sup> Leider, 'Taxation', pp. 77-79.

times of famine the king would lend his subjects rice from the royal granaries.<sup>34</sup> Rice that was handed out in times of famine had however to be repaid the next year.<sup>35</sup> The rice stored in the royal granaries provided the tax paying population with a certain security in times of famine. It is also likely that the royal granaries were at the same time used as central provisions in times of war. The speed with which Arakanese armies could be raised and despatched presupposes the existence of large magazines which could quickly provide food for these military expeditions. The VOC only bought rice from the king when they were unable to buy on the market. This was for example often the case when they did not have a permanent factory in Arakan and arrived long after or before the rice harvest.<sup>36</sup>

The king or members of his Privy Council attempted to create a monopoly on rice exports twice. One attempt was made in the late 1630s by the *lashkar-wazir* of Sirisudhammaraja, the other by the treasurer of Candasudhammaraja at the end of the 1650s. Both monopolies only survived a few years and were abolished after the (violent) deaths of the monopolists involved.<sup>37</sup> As these monopolies were farmed out by the king at a set price they could provide the king with a predictable source of income. The fact that the attempts at monopoly were only twice successful for a very short period of time also shows the lack of royal support for these monopolies. It is in fact striking that apart from the brief involvement in trade of Sirisudhammaraja and his queen Nat Shin May the Arakanese nobility seems not to have been very active in trade. The absence of larger brokers in the market is also striking. The Arakanese nobility and the king seem to have been more oriented towards agriculture and land revenue collection. This could well explain why they were much more involved in the other important sector of the Mrauk U economy, the slave trade which will be discussed further on in this Chapter.

The preferred and most commonly used method to buy rice by the VOC was to lend small local farmers or traders money for which they would provide the VOC with rice against a fixed price. The price was determined at the time the money was advanced. This method was used both by VOC officials sent from Arakan to Chittagong and by the chief of the factory in Arakan itself.<sup>38</sup> This method involved large numbers of people, usually between

<sup>34</sup> NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643.

<sup>35</sup> The VOC also engaged in the rice trade in Arakan itself. The company charged a 50% interest on rice sold during the rainy season. For every 100 *maten* distributed, 150 *maten* would have to be repaid after the harvest. NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637.

<sup>36</sup> NA VOC 1096, fol. 136-137 Letter from Martinus Lowijzen and Roelof Cornelisz Kan to Marten Ijsbrantsz in Pulicat, dated Arakan 21 October 1628.

<sup>37</sup> On the 1636-1638 monopoly of the *lashkar-wazir* see NA VOC 858, fol. 534-539 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 21 July 1636 and NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637. For the 1657-1662 monopoly the treasurer paid the king 1,000 Rupees for the right to exploit the monopoly, see NA VOC 1221, fol. 484-491 Letter from Hendrik de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 March 1657 and NA VOC 1240, fol. 1555-1560 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg and Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 7 December 1662., fol. 1559-1559v.

<sup>38</sup> NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637.

100 and 200 contracts were made this way. The contractors were not all farmers, some would use the money advanced to them to contract themselves with rice farmers to buy paddy after the harvest. The VOC's contractors would pound the paddy they had bought, so that the VOC would receive the rice directly from them. The contractors almost all lived near the VOC factory.<sup>39</sup> There were no large brokers involved. In 1644 for example Arent van der Helm ordered rice for 5,000 Tanka from more than 250 different farmers for 2.5 Tanka each *carre*. This way rice could be bought at prices considerably below market conditions. The same rice was valued at 2.75 to 3 Tanka when bought on the market following the harvest.<sup>40</sup> If we assume that the 250 contractors in 1644 would have needed to provide 2,000 *carre* (415,000 kg), a contractor then would on average need to supply 8 *carre* or 1,660 kg rice, bought from different farmers or villages. Today figures of contemporary rice yields are shown to vary between c. 1,500 kg per hectare<sup>41</sup> in some places in Africa to c. 3,200 kg on average in Asia. These figures would indicate that the VOC bought its rice not from large landowners, but from petty farmers. This suggestion is substantiated by the fact that Van der Helm usually describes the contractors as 'families' or 'poor people'.<sup>42</sup> The detail from a VOC map of the Kaladan river from the late seventeenth century reproduced below seems to confirm Van der Helms statements that the main rice producing area of Arakan was situated on the north-eastern banks of the Kaladan river between Urittaung and Mrauk U. It is this area that is depicted with the greatest detail, the rest of the Kaladan valley was not surveyed in great detail.

Next page: Map of the Kaladan river, with a detail of the main rice producing area around Mrauk U<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643.

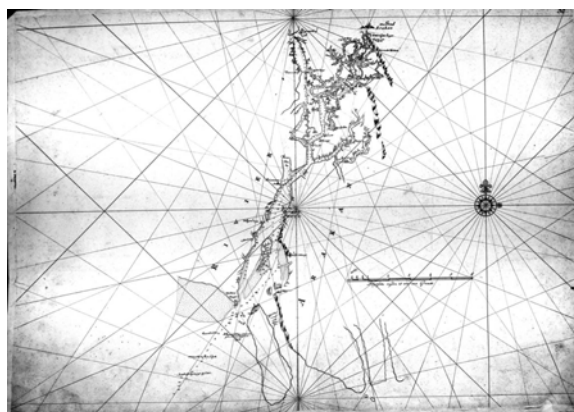
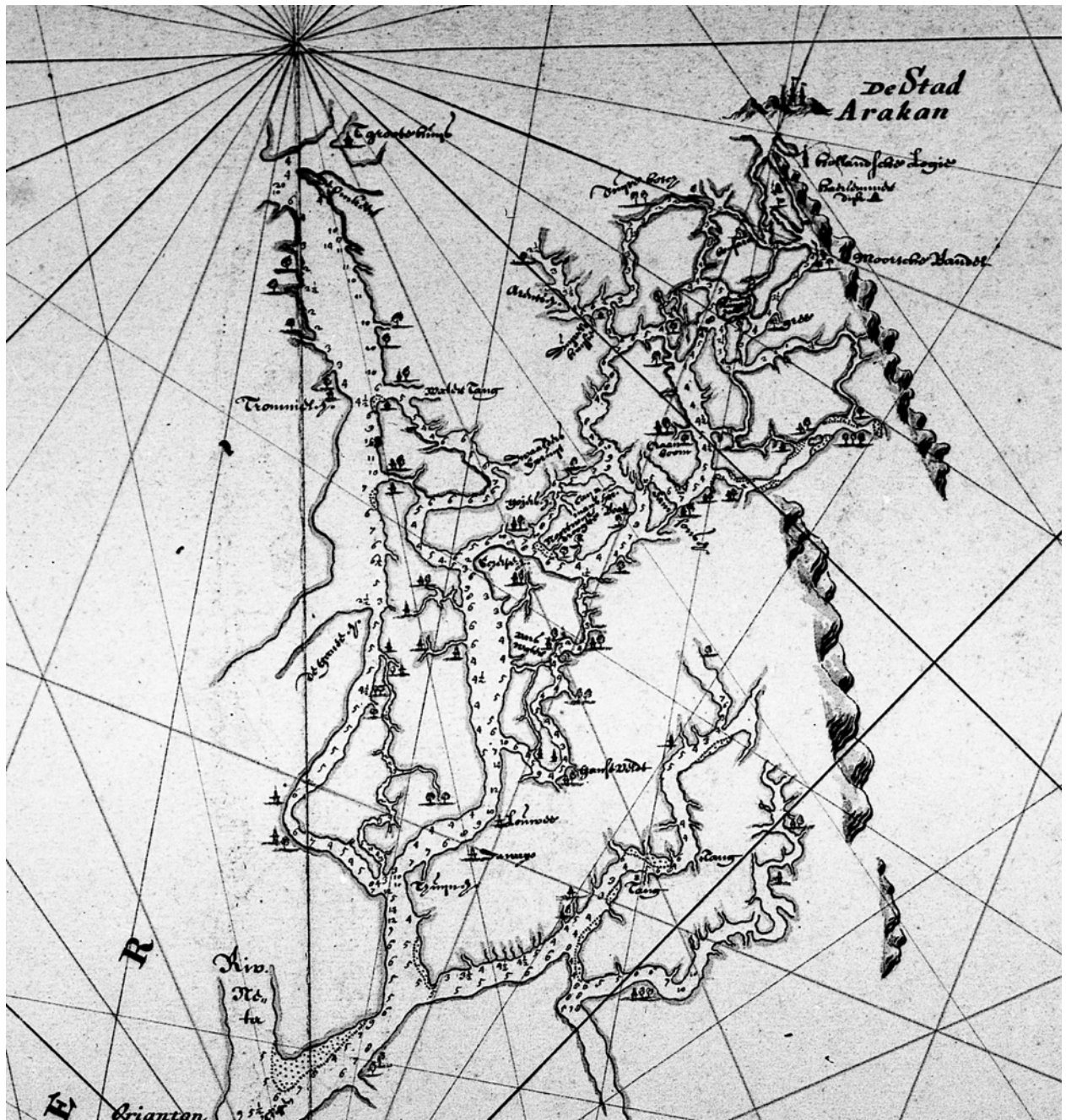
<sup>40</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 479-487 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 February 1645.

<sup>41</sup> 100 m<sup>2</sup> or 2.47 acres. V.N. Nguyen, *Rice Information* Vol. 3 (FAO: Rome 2002), Chapter 1.

<sup>42</sup> NA VOC 1155, fol. 493-516 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1644.

<sup>43</sup> NA VEL 261. Isaak de Graaf, Kaart van de Rivier van Arracan, van de Mond tot de Stad van dien naam [n.d.]: 1:281,300.





In the early seventeenth century the ease with which rice could be bought in Arakan meant that the company did not feel the need to establish a permanent factory in Arakan. Instead during the years following the embassy of 1627 the VOC decided to withdraw its personnel from Arakan. VOC crews arriving in Arakan had in previous years been able to buy rice and slaves on the spot. The extra costs of keeping a factory in Arakan were therefore deemed to be not in accordance with the benefits of a permanent factory.<sup>44</sup> Free merchants operating from Batavia would be allowed to trade to Arakan even after the strict protocol laid down by the VOC's directors in 1631 came into force. The price of rice in Batavia or for example Banda was during the 1620s about 400 to 600% higher than in Arakan. Coen wrote to the governor of Banda in 1629 that he should sell the rice from Arakan at between forty and fifty *reals of eight* for each *last* (1,482 kg).<sup>45</sup> In Batavia rice prices had even gone to sixty *reals of eight*, while rice from Siam cost between 47 and 42 *reals of eight*. Arakanese rice was bought at about 21 Tanka for a *last* (1,482 kg), which would average out on about 10 *reals of eight*. In the end the presence of free merchants in Arakan was felt to be disadvantageous to the VOC.<sup>46</sup> In 1634 the Council at Batavia decided to 'extend the commerce of Batavia and embrace the trade of Bengal, Pegu and Arakan'.<sup>47</sup> This resulted in the establishment of a permanent factory in Arakan in 1635.

Data on the mainstay of the seventeenth century Arakanese economy, the rice trade, can only be found in the archives of the VOC. The description below of this important sector of the Arakanese economy is therefore heavily influenced by Dutch perspectives. The following pages will focus on the development of the market during the seventeenth century.

In 1608 Pieter Willemsz and Jan Gerritsz Ruyll who headed the first Dutch trading mission to Arakan, sold their goods for 3,600 Tanka. In return Man Raja-kri promised to supply them with 1200 *carre* (249,500 kg)<sup>48</sup> rice. The price of rice would thus be 3 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg). In February Willemsz departed on board a ship of the Arakanese king, destined for Coromandel. Ruyll was left in Arakan to buy the remaining 250 *carre* (51,875 kg). In March 1608 Ruyll had to leave Arakan, with a cargo of 1044 *carre* (216,630 kg). The

<sup>44</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 7:1445-1447 Letter from Marten IJsbrantsz to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 17 September 1628; Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp 5:516 Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 12 May 1629.

<sup>45</sup> A *last* at this time was equal to 3,000 Amsterdam pounds. An Amsterdam pound equalled 494 gram. A *last* therefore is c. 1,482 kg.

<sup>46</sup> *Dagh-register* 1631-1634, p. 65 entry for 6 March 1632. The reasons why this was felt to be disadvantageous are not clear.

<sup>47</sup> *Omme voorders haere Ed. maxima nopende d'extensie van commercie te erlangen, ende waer te nemen, alle t'gene de Comp. tegen haer swaere lasten eenich soulaes soude connen toebrengen, hebben wij voorgenomen, den handelvan Bengala, Pegu ende Aracan te embrasseeren. Dagh-register* 1631-1634, pp. 352-353 entry for 12 July 1634.

<sup>48</sup> A *carre* weighted 420 Amsterdam pounds. An Amsterdam pound equalled 494 gram so that one *carre* would be equal to 207.48 kilo. NA VOC 1082, fol. 66 Instruction for the council of the ships *Medenblik*, *Vreede*, *Tenasserim*, and *Bonne Remedie* dated Pulicat 25 August 1624.

king's treasurer, or *xama*<sup>49</sup>, had increased the price to 3.25 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg), after the departure of Willemsz. This price was not acceptable for Ruyll. Ruyll claimed that a Muslim merchant from Coromandel, Muhammad Beg, was behind the price increase, but we can easily imagine that the king's treasurer had also something to gain as he received a part of the import and export duties that normally would have been paid. Man Raja-kri had promised the VOC a toll-free trade, so that not only the king, but also his nobles were set to loose out on the duty-free transactions of the VOC. Ruyll exported the rice to Aceh, freighting a ship of the *malik-i tujjar* headed for Sumatra.<sup>50</sup> Ruyll explained that the price of rice had been negotiated with the treasurer and *manjlis*, the representative of all foreign merchants in Arakan, with the merchants Haji Baba and the aforementioned *malik-i tujjar* as witnesses.<sup>51</sup> In 1612 Jacob Dircksz Cortenhoeff had commissioned the building of a yacht, the *Groene Papegaai*, in Arakan for the service of the VOC in Asia. Cortenhoeff bought rice for the carpenters and other craftsmen working on the yacht at 2 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg).<sup>52</sup> In 1624 the price of rice still remained at about 2 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg).<sup>53</sup>

When in September 1627 the first Arakanese embassy arrived in Batavia the Arakanese had noticed that the Dutch settlement was almost stricken by a great famine after Mataram had laid siege to the city in 1628.<sup>54</sup> The importance of Arakanese rice for the survival of Batavia was thus immediately impressed upon the envoys. The Dutch entertained mixed feelings about the Arakanese presence in Batavia. On the one hand the diplomatic exchanges would provide the much needed rice to feed the city's populace; on the other hand the ambassadors would return with the knowledge of exactly how crucial Arakanese rice was

<sup>49</sup> In VOC sources mostly written as Sangma or Cachma.

<sup>50</sup> *Malik-i tujjar*, the chief merchant of a port. In this case perhaps the chief merchant from Aceh. In the source he is named *Moluque Tujar*.

<sup>51</sup> NA VOC 1055 Letters and papers from Aceh n.f. nr. 1 Letter from Jan Gerritsz Ruyll on board the ship of Moluque Tujar to the next VOC representative arriving in Arakan, dated Arakan 27 March 1608 and nr. 2 Letter from Jan Gerritsz Ruyll to Jacques L'Hermite in Banten, dated Aceh 20 July 1608.

<sup>52</sup> NA VOC 625 Accounts of the yacht *Groene Papegaai* in Arakan, kept by Jacob Dircksz Cortenhoeff between 8 January and 8 March 1612. The accounts also shed some light on construction methods. The first entry in the account book is for the costs incurred for bringing on land a large *prahu*. It seems this *prahu* was used as the ship's bottom. After this had been done 28 large beams were bought to be sawn into planks, cane was used to make ropes, iron was bought to make nails and bolts. The yacht had at least one mast. The total cost was 910 Tanka. The ship was launched only after the earth had been dug from underneath the keel. Three years later Hans de Haze again ordered for Pulicat an Arakanese ship, capable of carrying one or two canon and with oars as well as sails to fight against the Portuguese on the Coromandel coast. NA VOC 1059, fol. 58-59 Instructions for Andreas Crieck, in Arakan from Hans de Haze, dated Pulicat 5 May 1615. In 1624 again two *jelias* were ordered for Coromandel. NA VOC 1082, fol. 64-65 Instruction for Dirck van Haps from Marten IJsbrantsz, dated Pulicat 25 April 1624.

<sup>53</sup> NA VOC 1082, fol. 66 Instruction for the council of the ships *Vreede* and *Medenblick*. Price reported as 1 real of eight for a *carre*. As one real of eight equalled 50 stivers and the Tanka was valued at 24 stivers.

<sup>54</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp 5:295-296 Letter from Coen to Marten IJsbrantsz., dated Batavia 14 June 1628; Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp 5:306-309 Instruction from Coen for Martinus Lowijszen and council with the *fluijt* Edam destined for Arakan, dated Batavia 15 June 1628. Mataram besieged Batavia in 1628 and 1629. Coen died during the siege as a result of disease. H.E. Niemeijer, *Batavia. Een koloniale samenleving in de 17de eeuw* (Amersfoort: Balans, 2005), pp. 24-25; Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, p. 12.

for the survival of Batavia and how cheap it was in comparison with Batavian prices. The marked price difference was indeed sufficient reason to discourage the sending of Arakanese envoys to Batavia.<sup>55</sup>

In 1636 rice was estimated to cost the VOC in Arakan 3.5 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg), including transport and other costs incurred in Arakan. From at least the 1630s the VOC cooperated closely with the leaders of the Portuguese community in Arakan and Chittagong. Rice from Chittagong was brought on board ships of the *capitão mor* of the Portuguese Manuel Rodrigo Tigre. The close cooperation with the Portuguese *chatins* even moved the VOC to supply these men with VOC passes so that they could trade unmolested throughout the Indian Ocean. Tigre and other leaders of the Portuguese community, like Diogo de Sá, were also allowed to freight VOC ships heading for Batavia.<sup>56</sup> In February 1636 Batavia received 2,071 *carre* (429,732.5 kg) rice, half of which was immediately sent on to Ambon and the Banda islands. The amount of rice from Arakan would feed a population of approximately 3,000 persons for one year. In February and March 1637 three ships, *Oostkapelle*, *Ruttem* and *Otter* brought 471.5 *last* (698,763 kg) rice, enough to feed circa 5,000 people a whole year.<sup>57</sup> Batavia had in 1632 8,060 inhabitants, Ambon and Banda counted in 1625 820 company servants.<sup>58</sup> It has to be understood that the amounts asked for in 1636 and 1637 were rather low as the VOC had again received rice from Mataram.<sup>59</sup> Batavia in fact only wanted 400 to 500 *last* (between 592,800 and 741,000 kg) for 1637. Still from these figures the crucial importance of Arakanese rice for the survival of Batavia and the Spice Islands can easily be understood. The Arakan factory was a kind of life insurance for the VOC. In times of war with Mataram or Banten the company would be able to count on Arakan to supply Batavia and the Spice Islands with rice. The cheapness of Arakanese rice was in itself of course also a good reason to maintain a factory in Arakan.

The establishment of a permanent factory was directly followed by the attempt to create a monopoly in the rice trade in Arakan by two high ranking court officials, Ashraf Khan the *lashkar-wazir* and the king's treasurer who was also the king's chief merchant. The fact that at the same time VOC employees in Arakan were stimulated to participate in the rice trade in Arakan itself to defray the VOC's operating costs in Arakan, could very well have

<sup>55</sup> Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp 5:451-453 Letter from Coen to president Vischer in Banda, dated Batavia 25 January 1629.

<sup>56</sup> NA VOC 858, fol. 534-539 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 21 June 1636; NA VOC 867, fol. 298 Letter from Batavia to Diogo de Sá, dated Batavia 16 May 1643. Diogo de Sá was allowed to ship on his own risk on VOC ships to Batavia annually goods worth about 200 to 300 Tanka. See also NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643.

<sup>57</sup> The *last* was set to 3,000 pounds when calculating rice shipments. The World Food Programme of the United Nations recons 144 kilo rice per person per annum as a minimum.

<sup>58</sup> Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, p. 85; Gaastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>59</sup> NA VOC 858, fol. 778 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 13 September 1636.

contributed to the attempts by the court to establish the monopoly.<sup>60</sup> In 1636 the VOC in Arakan bought 11,840 *sandons*<sup>61</sup> paddy (rice in the husk) after the harvest. They hoped to sell this during the rainy season with a good profit. This first attempt was not a total success. Only 5,000 *sandons* were eventually given out on loan, they would be repaid next season when the farmers would provide the VOC with 150 *maten* (1,556.3 kg)<sup>62</sup> for every 100 *maten* (1,073.5 kg) they had borrowed from the company. The entry of the VOC on the internal market for rice was evidently not well received by the king and the Arakanese nobility. The sale of rice to the VOC was prohibited on pain of corporal punishment and a rice monopoly was established in 1637. In 1637 the VOC bought 1,000 *carre* (207,500 kg) from the *lashkar-wazir* for between 4 and 4.5 Tanka per *carre* (207.5 kg), which according to Adam van der Mandere was about 1.5 Tanka above market conditions, which averaged between 2.5 to 3 Tanka each *carre*. Rice prices had been double the year before as a result of the famines that had struck Arakan between 1631 and 1634.<sup>63</sup> On the whole the price of rice seemed remarkably stable between 1608 and 1637, averaging at between 2 and 3 Tanka when the harvests had been good. The monopoly of the *lashkar-wazir* was resented by the VOC, but even with the monopoly in place the price of rice in Arakan was still so low that the governor-general and council in Batavia wanted to avoid an all out confrontation with the Arakanese.<sup>64</sup> The monopoly was even attributed to the weakness of the chief of the VOC factory in Arakan, Adam van der Mandere. In 1638 rice prices plunged to a low of 1.9 Tanka. This time the VOC only paid 0.125 Tanka above the market price.<sup>65</sup> The VOC however did not buy large quantities of rice this time because in 1638 and 1639 rice imports in Batavia from Mataram had provided the VOC with enough grain to supply the city for the time being. The fact that rice could only be bought with silver, which was always in short supply, was a major set back. Arakanese rice was however still 85% cheaper than Javanese rice imported from Mataram. Batavia therefore continued to send ships to Arakan to buy rice. As we will see in the next paragraph, the fact that Arakan also promised a rich supply of slaves was another important reason to keep a permanent factory in Arakan.<sup>66</sup>

In 1640 Batavia requested only about 300 to 400 *last* rice.<sup>67</sup> After the conquest by the VOC of Melaka in 1641 the VOC felt it would need to depend less on Arakan for its imports

<sup>60</sup> NA VOC 858, fol. 778 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 13 September 1636.

<sup>61</sup> An as yet unspecified Arakanese weight.

<sup>62</sup> 1 *carre* equalled 20 *maten*.

<sup>63</sup> Paddy was valued at 4.5 Tanka for 100 *maten* (ie. 5 *carre* or 1073.5 kg), this would gain about 2 *carre* (415 kg) white rice. NA VOC 1125, fol. 477-485 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan 10 January 1637.

<sup>64</sup> NA VOC 859, fol. 797-809 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 11 September 1637.

<sup>65</sup> NA VOC 1126, fol. 291-297 Letter from Adam van der Mandere to Batavia, dated Arakan November 1638, fol.

<sup>66</sup> NA VOC 863, fol. 479-485 Letter from Batavia to Adam van der Mandere, dated Batavia 6 august 1639.

<sup>67</sup> NA VOC 864, fol. 437 Letter from Batavia to Arent van der Helm, dated Batavia 9 August 1640.

of rice. The same year Batavia imported more than 2,000 *last* (2,964,000 kg) of rice from Mataram. The VOC chief in Arakan, Arent van der Helm, was ordered to concentrate on buying slaves instead of rice.<sup>68</sup> The following year Batavia was reminded how much they still depended on rice from Mataram when sultan Agung (1613-1646) decided to prohibit rice exports following a bad harvest.<sup>69</sup> Van der Helm was ordered to buy at least 600 *last* (889,200 kg) rice. This would have been enough to feed about 6,000 people for one year, or perhaps 75% of the Batavian population.<sup>70</sup> In Arakan 1642 was also a bad year for the rice harvest. The twofold increase in VOC demand moved king Narapati-kri to ask the VOC to voluntarily limit its rice purchases. The letters of Van der Helm to Batavia are on the one hand full of indignation about Arakanese accusations that the buying of rice by the VOC led to the starvation of poor people in Arakan because VOC demand had such an impact on market prices. On the other hand Van der Helm admits that rice prices in Arakan had not been as high in twelve years as they were in 1643.<sup>71</sup> Prices were reported to have risen in 1643 to 3 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg), which was indeed substantially higher than they had been the preceding years, but still on the same level as during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the sharp increase in VOC demand in 1642 had a substantial impact on the rice market in Arakan. The large influx of people from Bengal from 1644, combined with bad harvests meant rice prices increased in 1644 and 1645 from 3 to 4.75 Tanka for each *carre* (207.5 kg), which meant more than a 50% increase. The bad harvest and the increase in population meant that large numbers of people died of starvation.<sup>72</sup> The harvests of 1645 and 1646 brought prices down. In October 1646 paddy was going at 6 Tanka for 100 *maten*, coming to 3 Tanka for each *carre* rice, excluding costs of pounding and transport. Satuidhammaraja again prohibited rice sales to the VOC and tried to force Van der Helm to buy rice from the treasurer for about 6 Tanka each *carre*.<sup>73</sup> The resettlement of large groups of Bengalis from the Chittagong area, in combination with several bad harvests had effectively increased the price of rice from 3 to 6 Tanka. This increase in price resulted in

<sup>68</sup> NA VOC 865, fol. 526-530 Letter from Batavia to Arent van der Helm, dated Batavia 19 October 1641.

<sup>69</sup> NA VOC 866, fol. 299-303 Letter from Batavia to Arent van der Helm, dated Batavia 31 May 1642.

<sup>70</sup> The same amount was requested from Coromandel.

<sup>71</sup> After a long discussion on the unreasonable ban on rice exports by Narapati, Van der Helm admits that rice prices had never been this high in the past decade and that he could understand that the king had asked the VOC not to buy more rice than needed for the subsistence of the factory. He only clearly disagreed with the Arakanese court who maintained that these price rises were due to VOC demand. Subrahmanyam clearly missed this point when he described Van der Helm's response to the export ban as a discourse by Van der Helm on "tyranny". NA VOC 1151, fol. 622-634 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 October 1643, fol. 622v-623; 626v and Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', p. 229.

<sup>72</sup> In 1644 old paddy was valued at 4.5 to 5, and new paddy at between 5.5 and 6 Tanka for 100 *maten* which would yield about 2 *carren* rice. In 1645 prices rose to between 7.5 to 9.5 Tanka. NA VOC 1155, fol. 479-487 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 February 1645; Diary of Van der Helm 1645, entry for 26 to 30 June and NA VOC 1159, fol. 369-383 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1645.

<sup>73</sup> NA VOC 1163, fol. 178-191 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 October 1646, fol. 184-187v.

mass starvation in Arakan itself, the groups most affected were of course the recently arrived Bengalis. For the VOC this had a significant side effect, famine conditions had a positive effect on the supply of slaves. From 1643 VOC exports of rice had dwindled because of the export ban, VOC demand could therefore not have been a major cause in the sharp increase of rice prices after 1643.

After the departure of the VOC in 1647, information on rice prices in Arakan is again only available from 1653 when the company again returned. It seems that after 1653 the price of rice had again come down to an average of 3 Tanka. Information on rice prices is however not easily deducted from VOC material after 1653. Cargoes sent from Arakan to Batavia are during this period generally valued as a whole, with no information on the price of separate goods. The quantity of rice exported from Arakan is however seen to increase considerably. In 1662 for example VOC factors were able to buy 5,600 *carre* (1,162,000 kg) within only three weeks. It seems that during the 1653-1665 period exports were constrained only by the number of ships the VOC sent to Arakan.<sup>74</sup> It is possible that the sudden increase in population from 1643 had led in the long run to an increase in the area cultivated in Arakan, which in turn made more rice available for export. Batavia would need Arakanese rice badly during the second half of the 1650s when the *susuhunan* of Mataram closed all Javanese ports to VOC shipping and prohibited the export of rice. As mentioned in the introduction to this paragraph in 1656 Batavia reminded its factors in Arakan that they had not received rice from Java in 6 to 12 months and that Batavia expected Arakan to supply as much rice as could be obtained to 'feed this large body'.<sup>75</sup>

In 1665 the VOC again left Arakan to return in 1677. In 1677 rice prices appeared to have continued to fall to about between 2 and 3 Tanka each *carre* (207.5 kg). In 1682 the price stood at only 2.5 Tanka.<sup>76</sup> It appears that the price of rice in Arakan had remained stable throughout the seventeenth century at between 2 and 3 Tanka during normal years. Bad harvests would of course occasionally result in a temporary sharp increase in prices. The high prices following the resettlement program of the 1640s combined with bad harvests remain the only exception to this rule. The mass deportation initiated by Narapati-kri in 1643 resulted in sharp increases in the price of rice and almost everything else. Rice prices more than doubled during these years and resulted in famine. High rice prices continued at least until 1647. It is reasonable to assume that they continued well into the early years of

<sup>74</sup> NA VOC 1240, fol. 216-224 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg and Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 31 January 1662, fol. 219.

<sup>75</sup> 'dat den rijs hier doorgaens schaers omkomt, ende ons in groote quantiteit van andere plaetsen dient te werden versocht, om dit groote lichaem te spijsighen ende niet verleen te vallen'. NA VOC 880, fol. 459-462 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 22 July 1656, see also NA VOC 881, fol. 395-401 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 20 August 1657; NA VOC 881, fol. 534-536 Letter from Batavia to Hendrik de Dieu, dated Batavia 30 October 1657.

<sup>76</sup> NA VOC 1339, fol. 918-924 Letter from Jacob van der Plancken to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 January 1678 and *Dagh-register* 1682 1.704-705 entry for 4 June 1682.

Candasudhammaraja's reign. The temporary cessation of taxation during the first three years of Candasudhammaraja's reign from 1652 to 1655 suggests that during these years extraordinary measures were needed to revive the Arakanese economy. After 1684 the peace with Banten enabled the VOC to obtain rice from sources closer to Batavia. This meant Arakanese rice was not needed anymore to secure a steady food supply for Batavia and the Spice Islands.

#### 8.4 Slave trade

In 1574 the Mughal Emperor Akbar defeated Daud Khan in a battle near Patna. For almost a whole century following this victory Bengal was the scene of an intense struggle between the Arakanese, Mughals and local lords.<sup>77</sup> In these battles the Arakanese would prove to be the toughest adversary the Mughals would encounter. As a result of the ensuing Mughal-Arakanese wars a trade in Bengal slaves developed in south-eastern Bengal during the seventeenth century. It is my contention that the demand for slaves from the VOC fundamentally changed the nature of this trade in Arakan and Bengal.<sup>78</sup>

The VOC needed slaves for a wide variety of purposes. The spice plantations on Ambon and the Banda islands could not be operated without the use of slave labour, and Batavia itself was also largely dependant on slave labour.<sup>79</sup> Already in the early years of the seventeenth century VOC officials in Asia requested permission from the VOC's board in the Netherlands to operate the company's spice plantations with the help of slave labour. The use of slaves was not something that was agreed upon by all high ranking VOC officials. In 1617 the admiral Streven van der Haghen reminded the Amsterdam chamber that he had always been in favour of the use of slaves but had been opposed by the governor-general Pieter Both (1610-1614), who had deemed it inappropriate for Christians to use slaves. Pieter Both had at several moments set free slaves that had been captured by Van der Haghen. Frederik de Houtman as governor of Ambon had likewise refused to use slaves as company servants.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, pp. 137-158 cf. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, passim.

<sup>78</sup> For a good overview of Indian Ocean slave trade and the leading role of the VOC see Markus Vink, "The world's oldest trade": Dutch slavery and slave trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of World History* 14 (2003), <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jwh/14.2/vink.html>> (24 Dec. 2007).

<sup>79</sup> Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, pp. 109-130; Niemeijer, *Batavia*, passim; Vink, 'The world's oldest trade', paras. 22-25

<sup>80</sup> NA VOC 1064, fol. 194- 202 Letter from Steven van der Haghen to the chamber Amsterdam, dated Ambon 26 May 1617, fol. 200-201v. 'Ick hebbe U.Ed. voor desen geschreven dat ons slaven so nodich syn sonder die qualicken huis te houden is [...] Hadden van die tyt aff dat ick met myn vlote voor Mossambique was mogen naer myn sin gaen soudon die nu geen gebreck hebben. Men liet daer ettelicke hondert lopen die by ons verovert waren om aen die menschen een christenlick werck te bewisen. [...] Dat meer is Amboina verovert synde anno 1605 quam daer een Corre corre van Burro met over die hondert Tidoresen onse vianden menende te comen onder een Portegesen armada, maer quamen ons inde handt. Daer ick blyde om was dat ons Godt in sulcken noot so een hoop slaven thoe sondt maer Houtman die doen noch by de selve opinie was als voor Mossambiques seide dattet niet christelicken en was slaven te houden. Daer de Portegisen in Amboina wel inne verwondert



In 1621 with a show of brutal force the Dutch governor-general Jan-Pietersz. Coen established VOC control over the Banda archipelago. Coen forcibly removed or killed most of the indigenous population of the Banda islands, estimated at 15,000 people. This horrifying act left the VOC in the possession of the world's only source of nutmeg and mace, but without workers to tend the nutmeg gardens. Coen introduced on Banda a plantation system with so-called *perkeniers*, or keepers of the nutmeg gardens. The VOC provided the *perkeniers* with slaves to do the work for them. The slaves needed for the Spice Islands such as Banda were until 1624 bought or captured in a fairly haphazard way. From 1623 onwards the VOC would find a structural supply of slaves on the Arakanese market.<sup>81</sup> Demand for slaves increased when in 1634 180,000 new nutmeg trees were planted, and more and more trees were to be planted during the following decades. On Banda natural disasters such as several severe earthquakes in the 1620's, a tsunami in 1629, and virulent diseases in the 1630's meant that demand for slaves remained high for at least the whole seventeenth century.<sup>82</sup> The high labour costs in the Southeast Asian port cities were another factor in the European demand for Asian slaves.<sup>83</sup> Batavia was to become essentially a slave society.<sup>84</sup> The sustained demand from a single large buyer had a profound effect on the slave trade in Arakan and Bengal. In the following paragraphs it will be argued that the Arakan slave trade transformed from supply to demand driven.

The reports of the trade in the Bay of Bengal at the start of the seventeenth century by Willemsz and Cortenhoef quoted in the introduction to this Chapter are remarkably silent about a possible trade in slaves. VOC reports describing market conditions in Mrauk U itself

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*waren dat men so een schone hoop slaven liet lopen. Vraechden als wy geen slaven wilden houwen wy ons werck soude doen. Sonder twifel hebben se onder malcanderen geseit dat wy een hoop beesten waren die so veel niet en wisten Ick hebbe U.Ed voor dese oock geadviseert dat men vant eylant Madagascar aende binnen cant aen de noort syde [...] Dat men daer slaven genoech can become om twee realen van achten ende min elcke swarte doch daer dienen vrouwen oock te wesen so houdt mense best inde dienst & by een. Die kinderen dise procreeren blyven al slaven vanden heer ende di Madagascars syn goeden aert van slaven [...] Aen eygen slaven is ons veel aengelegen die en can men niet missen. Watten slechten dingen is dat van generael Bot geweest die so veel slaven vry gegeven heeft. t'Ware beter dat hy goudt ofte silver noch had gegeven een slave die wat is gelt nu in Amboina 80, 90 & over de hondert realen.'* The issue was debated in the Dutch Republic from the late sixteenth century. P.C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850* 2<sup>nd</sup> revd. ed. (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2003), pp. 34-35.

<sup>81</sup> From 1626 onwards slaves were difficult to procure on the Coromandel coast. As the economy prospered it meant that less people needed to sell themselves or their relatives as slaves because of their debts. Before 1626 slaves on the coast reportedly came not only from Golconda, but also from Malabar and Cutchin. Letter by Pieter de Carpentier, dated 3-1-1624 and 3-2-1626 published in W.Ph. Coolhaas ed. *Generale Missiven van Goeverneur-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der VOC* 2 Vols. (Martinus Nijhof The Hague 1960-1964) Vol. 1. Vink, 'The world's oldest trade', paras. 53-57.

<sup>82</sup> Banda had in 1638 3,842 inhabitants of which 2,190 slaves, in 1640 there were only 1,120 inhabitants left, in 1642 4,290 souls, in 1645 3,525 and in 1663 there were 5,103 people on Banda. The population of Banda would never again reach its estimated size of 15,000. V.I. van de Wall 'Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Perkeniers, 1621-1671', *Tijdschrift voor de Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van het Koninklijk Bataviaas Genootschap* 74 (1934), pp. 516-580.

<sup>83</sup> S. Arasaratnam, 'Slave trade in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century' in K.S. Mathew ed., *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans* (Delhi: Manohar, 1995), pp. 197-199.

<sup>84</sup> Vink, 'The world's oldest trade', para 25; Niemeijer, *Batavia* passim.

are also devoid of any information regarding the slave trade. In 1608 Jan Gerritsz Ruyll reported from Mrauk U to company headquarters in Banten about market conditions at Mrauk U. Ruyll spoke of the rice trade, the market for cloth, and on the subject of various other commodities. Slaves were however not among the items listed by Ruyll.<sup>85</sup> It is clear that the VOC was at this time not particularly interested in slaves. It is however unlikely that the slave trade would have been left out of the aforementioned reports had it existed at that time. The VOC was in Asia with the primary goal of making a profit. If there had been a trade in slaves in Arakan it would most likely have been mentioned in the reports cited here.<sup>86</sup> The absence of references to the slave trade before the early seventeenth century is also noted by Subrahmanyam.<sup>87</sup> Although a large market for the export of slaves does not seem to exist before the early seventeenth century, this is not to say slavery did not exist. Incessant warfare between the Mughals, the Arakanese, the Portuguese, and the Burmese would have provided anyone of these parties with large numbers of captured enemies who would have become slaves in the hands of their captors.<sup>88</sup> The Bengal frontier provided moreover a classic example of what J.C. Heesterman has termed the “inner frontier”; where tribal peoples of hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, and pastoral nomads in the interior forest and hill tracts were separated from sedentary rice farmers of the coastal and riverine floodplains. With the expansion of the agricultural frontier these forest and pastoral peoples, together with other outsiders without community protection, were reduced to various degrees of dependency upon landed households.<sup>89</sup> Debt slavery no doubt existed as well before the arrival of the VOC. It seems however that by this time slaves were not sold from Arakanese or Bengal ports in large quantities on an open market as they would be in years to come.

The successful wars of king Sirisudhammaraja against the Mughal empire in Bengal inaugurated the large scale intra-Asian trade in slaves from Arakan. The wars of

<sup>85</sup> NA VOC 1055 Brieven en papieren uit Atchin n.f. nr. 1 Copie missive van Jan Gerritsz. Ruyll uyt het schip van Mollicque Tusajer aen den raedt der schepen commende in Arracan, in dato 27 maart 1608 [Letters from Atjeh n.f. nr. 1 Copy of a letter from Jan Gerritsz. Ruyll on board the ship of Mollicque Tusajer written to the council of captains of the next ships arriving in Arakan, dated 27-3-1608].

<sup>86</sup> Ruyll for example is thinking aloud in his letter to his colleagues about what to do with the money he had left after the sale of his cargo to the king. NA VOC 1055 Ruyll 1608.

<sup>87</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam in his article ‘Slaves and Tyrants in Mrauk U’ explored some aspects of Dutch trade with Arakan during the seventeenth century. Subrahmanyam observes that Mughal sources are silent as well on slave trade in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in this part of the Bay of Bengal. He has suggested that the slave trade in Arakan should be thought of as a seventeenth century phenomenon. Subrahmanyam, ‘Slaves and Tyrants’, pp. 209.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. for North India D.H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of a Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11. See also Arasaratnam, ‘Slave trade’, pp. 200-207 and Vink, ‘The world’s oldest trade’, paras. 25-46.

<sup>89</sup> Vink, ‘The world’s oldest trade’, para 40 quoting J.C. Heesterman, ‘Warrior, Peasant and Brahmin’, *Modern Asian Studies* 29.3 (1995), pp. 637-54; J. C. Heestermann, ‘The Hindu Frontier’, *Itinerario* 13.1 (1989), pp.1-16; J. C. Heestermann, ‘Littoral et Interieur de l’Inde’ in L. Blussé, H. L. Wesseling, and G.D. Winus, eds., *History and Underdevelopment: Essays on Underdevelopment and European Expansion in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1980), pp. 87-92.

Sirisudhammaraja coincided with the start of VOC control over the Spice Islands and the foundation of Batavia in 1619 and the resulting need for slaves in the archipelago. Sirisudhammaraja started his wars in 1622 with a campaign directed at Dakhin Shabazpur and other parts of the Meghna delta. In 1624, Bhalua was raided, in 1625 Sripur was taken, and in 1626 Dhaka was sacked and tens of thousands were taken as slaves to Arakan.<sup>90</sup> The other campaigns that are known to us are the 1632 large scale attack on Bengal which ironically drove the Portuguese from Pipili to Hugli from where they were removed the same year by the Mughals, and in 1633 an attack on Bengal with the help of ships of the *Estado da Índia* from Goa. This time the Arakanese were asked to aid the Portuguese crown in an attempted recovery of Hugli.<sup>91</sup>

Arakanese campaigns seem to have concentrated on the weaving areas in eastern Bengal at Dhaka, Sripur, and Sonargaon. This was the economic heart of Bengal and the area over which Arakan and the Mughals had each strived to gain control since the late sixteenth century. This part of Bengal potentially yielded the highest tax revenues.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the Arakanese did not sell any skilled slaves abroad supports the idea that for Sirisudhammaraja the attacks on Bengal were also a means to develop a weaving industry in Arakan itself with the expertise of Bengal craftsmen.<sup>93</sup> The VOC was from the beginning only allowed to buy slaves on the condition that they had arrived directly from Bengal and were not skilled in any craft or trade.<sup>94</sup>

The successes of Sirisudhammaraja's campaigns in eastern Bengal necessitated the Mughal governor of Bengal Islam Khan Mashhadi in 1637 to send an ambassador to Mrauk U with orders to negotiate a peace.<sup>95</sup> It is interesting to note that the Mughal governor expressly points the finger to the Portuguese as being the central elements in the slave trade. Subrahmanyam also cites contemporary European authors who claim the slave raids were the work of the Portuguese.<sup>96</sup> The records of the VOC confirm the idea that the Portuguese were the essential figures in this trade. On several occasions the Dutch factors remark that without Portuguese assistance the Arakanese would not go slave raiding in Bengal. As described in the previous Chapters in 1643 the Portuguese *chatins* assisted the chief of the royal bodyguard, the *ko-ran-kri* in an attempt to dethrone king Narapati. When this attempt failed

<sup>90</sup> NA VOC 1087 Report on Arakan by Jan van der Burch 170r-172v.

<sup>91</sup> Letters of the governor-general at Batavia in Coolhaas, *Generale Missiven* Vol. 1 passim. In April 1633 in Mrauk U there were four frigates and a galleon sent by the Portuguese *viso-rey*, see *Dagh-register* 1631-1634, entry for 8 Februari 1634.

<sup>92</sup> NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130. Van Berchem confirms Bengal was especially important to the Arakanese because of its cloth production.

<sup>93</sup> This is also implicitly argued in Subrahmanyam's discussion of the slave trade in 'Slaves and Tyrants'.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>95</sup> The *Daghregister* at Batavia records for 13 February 1637 a letter dated 31 January 1637 from Adam van der Mandere.

<sup>96</sup> Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', pp. 213-214.

the local Portuguese did not return to Arakan fearing they would not escape punishment. The Dutch factor Arent van den Helm in 1643 foresaw that without the Portuguese the supply of slaves would dry out.<sup>97</sup> Van der Helm claimed that the Portuguese and their local crews were better soldiers who were used to fighting and confronting an enemy on an almost daily basis. According to him the Portuguese were far more willing to risk life and limb in battle than the Arakanese.<sup>98</sup> In 1653, after an absence of five years, VOC employees noted that the Portuguese had stopped bringing in slaves to Arakanese ports, but had instead moved their activities to other harbours in the Bay of Bengal, notably to Pipli. This confirms the idea that on the one hand Dutch demand was vital for the slave trade in Arakan and on the other that the Portuguese were the main actors when it came to slave raids.

The fact that the Portuguese renegades, sponsored by the Arakanese kings, went to war with the sole purpose of enslaving their enemies is a substantial deviation of earlier practice. S. Arasaratnam in his article on the seventeenth century slave trade already pointed out that although slavery existed in India and Southeast Asia long before the arrival of the European trading companies, the trade more or less remained a local affair and was mostly fed by poverty, which necessitated people to sell themselves or their family to buy or secure access to food or pay off debts.<sup>99</sup>

After the VOC's return in 1653, the Arakanese slave trade slowly recovered. Candasudhammaraja in 1652 freed 50 Portuguese who had been imprisoned by Satuidhammaraja. From 1654 onwards the Portuguese started bringing in to Mrauk U new slaves. Mrauk U would however never regain its status as the central slave market in the region. Pipli would from this time onwards be the preferred destination of the operation which was to become an exclusively Portuguese affair. Dianga was in the early 1650s still very much desolate and life in the Portuguese enclave in Bengal only slowly recovered from the crisis of the late 1640s.<sup>100</sup> Candasudhammaraja started regulating the slave trade from 1655, issuing *firman*s that specified the number and kind of slaves that could be exported as

<sup>97</sup> Stephan van Galen, 'Arakan at the turn of the first millennium', pp. 158-159.

<sup>98</sup> 'Nu Bengalen geheel geraseert is en alle wevers als andere ambachtsluijden van daer herwaerts aengebracht werden soo sal nu den cleeden handel als mede den slaven inkoop doer dies de portugeesen verloopen sijn voor ons daer weinich omt lijff hebben, ende soo deselve portugeesen niet weder comen staet te duchten hier jaerlijckx gheen hondert slaven sullen worden geprocureert, wandt de Mogen haer liiff en leven soo niet sullen pruciteeren als dito portugeesen doen soo dat dan voorde Comp. weinigh sal sijn te versamelen dan rijs, witte doucken, negros cleeden als alderhande lijwaten slaedt dagelijckx seer op en staet te duchten noch vrij dierder sal worden soo den coninck Bengalen alle wevers ontreckt, dat wij verhoppen van neen, hier sijn incorte dagen over de 5.000 huijsgesin uit Bengalen gebracht Barbiers, wevers, pottenbackers, timmerlieden als andere ambachtsluijden, wordt oock geseijdt hij 't fordtt Chittigam slechten sal, ende een sterker in Ramo laeten maecken, wat daer van coomen sal den tijdt leeren.' NA VOC 1157, fol. 632-640 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 13 February 1644.

<sup>99</sup> Arasaratnam, 'Slave trade', passim.

<sup>100</sup> NA VOC 1202, fol. 397-407 Letter from David Verdonck and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 25 January 1654 and NA VOC 1202, fol. 408-414 Letter from David Verdonck and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 1 March 1654.

well as the place where they could be bought. In general the VOC would be allowed to export between 200 and 500 slaves each year during his reign. The export of Arakanese slaves, or slaves skilled in any art or craft was strictly prohibited.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> NA VOC 1209, fol. 301-308 Letter from Hendrik de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 8 January 1655; NA VOC 1212, fol. 138-168 Letter from Hendrik de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 November 1655; NA VOC 1236, fol. 887-892 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 26 March 1661; NA VOC 1236, fol. 892-901 Letter from Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 December 1661, fol. 898.



Slave market in Pipili: Lusu-Arakanese slave traders selling slaves to the VOC from Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*

After 1653 it seems that the business of slave raiding became more and more an entirely Portuguese affair. From this time on taxes on the slave trade would not be levied per head, but the Portuguese would have to deliver one slave to the king for every four they brought into Arakan.<sup>102</sup> Selling their slaves in Pipli the Portuguese tried to evade the 25% tax as much as possible.<sup>103</sup> The departure of the VOC was not the only reason the slave market in Arakan had collapsed. The Arakanese economy had suffered greatly from the resettlement programmes and high taxation of the 1640s so that in Arakan itself there were not many people able to buy slaves. On top of this the VOC itself had started buying slaves in Pipli, much to the detriment of the Mrauk U market.<sup>104</sup> The withering of Arakanese control in eastern Bengal moreover meant that the number of slaves captured was also at a low. In 1655 for example the Portuguese brought to Dianga only 89 slaves. The Arakanese governor of Chittagong, the *Bo Man*, had taken a large number as a tax for the king and five in return for the freedom of a Portuguese still in gaol in Arakan.<sup>105</sup> The 1656 campaign of Shah Shuja in Bengal also had a negative effect on slave raiding. The Arakanese now effectively lost control over eastern Bengal. From 1659 to 1660 and from 1662 to 1665 the VOC would on average ship between 200 and 500 slaves from Arakan each year. Between the death of Shah Shuja (1661) in Arakan and the death of Mir Jumla (1663) the slave trade came to a halt due to fears over a pending Mughal invasion to avenge the death of the Mughal prince. After 1665 slave raids almost ceased. The price of slaves rocketed from between 15 to 20 Rupees for a man in 1654/5 to 40 to 48 Rupees in 1665 and 1678. Prices of women and children were considerably lower, but experienced the same increase. After the VOC returned to Arakan in 1677 slave raids were only conducted occasionally. In November 1678 for example seven *jelias* were reported to have captured circa 300 people. This was regarded by the Arakanese as a major success and led to the launch of a fleet of about 60 *jelias* in December the same year.<sup>106</sup> After 1677 rice was the main cargo of VOC ships returning to Batavia from Mrauk U, slaves only sporadically formed part of the cargo.

### *The practice of slave raiding*

Perhaps the most revealing text on slave raiding is the 1650 instruction and commission for Pieter Cocqu regarding the VOC's military expedition to Arakan that year.<sup>107</sup> Cocqu was sent

<sup>102</sup> Roberts reports that in 1777 the king claimed the right to one fourth of the slaves captured in Bengal. Roberts adds that of the goods taken half of the proceeds go to the king. Roberts, 'An account of Arakan', p. 143.

<sup>103</sup> NA VOC 1212, fol. 138-168 Letter from Hendrik de Dieu and Gerrit van Voorburg to Batavia, dated Arakan 3 November 1655.

<sup>104</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>105</sup> NA VOC 1214, fol. 190-200v. Letter from Hendrik de Dieu to Batavia, dated Arakan 24 December 1655.

<sup>106</sup> NA VOC 1339, fol. 941v-944v Letter from Balthasar Hinlopen to Batavia, dated Arakan 15 December 1678.

<sup>107</sup> NA VOC 874, fol. 326-334 Commission and Instructions for Peter Cocque for the campaign against Arakan,

to Arakan with a dual commission, first he was to go slave raiding in Arakan itself, and second he was to seek an alliance with the ruler of Sandwip. The first part of his commission is of interest to us here. Cocqu had been the VOC's representative at Dianga and in this capacity he had accompanied the Portuguese *chatins* on their slave raiding expeditions in Bengal. Before he became a VOC employee he had been a private merchant plying the waters between Bengal and Tenasserim. Cocqu was therefore well equipped to conduct the VOC's slave raiding operations on the Arakanese coast. It is not hard to imagine that the instructions he received on how to conduct these raids were primarily drafted by Cocqu himself and perhaps Arent van der Helm.

The instructions reveal that Cocqu was to launch small *prahus* with native crews from his larger ships. The men in the *prahus* would row to the coast go on shore and acting as bait they would tempt Arakanese vessels to follow them to open sea. The idea was to have the larger ships lie in wait just behind the horizon, so as not to alert the Arakanese crews. As soon as the Arakanese ships came into view the Dutch *yachts* would sail and try to capture the Arakanese crews. This way they used the established practice in the Bay of Bengal that shipwrecked sailors would be liable to enslavement by their saviours to their advantage. Cocqu was ordered to start his campaign on Cheduba, sail to the river of Talak and slowly work his way up to the river of Augruckim, sailing up this river and any other river he encountered in the process, finishing with the Mayu and the islands under governorship of Martim d'Alfonso.<sup>108</sup> On the rivers the same tactics would be used as in the coastal areas. These tactics perhaps present an indication of the way slave raids were conducted in Bengal as well. This way the Portuguese could use their naval superiority to their advantage and with relative small numbers would be able to enslave large numbers of Bengalis.

Schouten described a different method of capturing slaves in the Ganges delta. On two trips to the VOC factory in Hugli in 1663 and 1664 Schouten observed Luso-Arakanese *jelias* patrolling the Hugli river in small groups of seven to eight boats. These *jelias* would operate on the Hugli as far up as Calcutta.<sup>109</sup> They used the lower reaches of the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, the Sunderbans, to move unopposed between the Sandwip and Pipli. On the Hugli the crews of the *jelias* would prey on small groups of local boats, attacking the crews by night when they went ashore to cook their food. Likewise they would attack villages at night and take the inhabitants away as slaves. This kind of slave raiding provides a typical example of

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dated Batavia 23 August 1650. Vide infra Chapter 6.

<sup>108</sup> Today Saint Martin's islands.

<sup>109</sup> The *thanadar* of Mukhwah near Calcutta famously stretched an iron chain across the river to try and keep Arakanese vessels at bay. BL OIOC Mss. 478 Salimullah, *Tarikh-i Bangala* translated by F. Gladwin as, *A narrative of the transactions in Bengal during the Soobahdaries of Azeem Us Shan, Jaffer Khan, Shuja Khan, Sirafraz Khan and Alivardi Khan translayed from the original Persian* (Calcutta, 1788), p. 84. R.C. Temple ed., *The diaries of Streynsham Master 1675-1680 and other contemporary papers relating thereto* 2 vols. (London, 1911), pp. 2:15, 66.



the slave raiding as conducted by the Portuguese, largely outside Arakanese royal control, but legitimized by commissions from the Arakanese king. As argued earlier this kind of slave raiding was stimulated by the insatiable demand of European companies, like the VOC, for slave labour in their cosmopolitan centres and on the Spice Islands.<sup>110</sup>

Slaves captured during military campaigns would be distributed amongst the military commanders of the Arakanese army. The lowest ranking commanders were probably the *borwas*, or village headmen acting as military commanders of a small unit of men raised from a village during times of war. They would receive anywhere between 10 and 20 slaves whereas larger amounts of slaves were given to higher ranking officials, who could see themselves rewarded with as much as 400 to 500 slaves after a successful campaign.<sup>111</sup> Slaves from Bengal had to be declared and registered at tollhouses at the Mayu river and in *Perovijn*.<sup>112</sup>

The conditions under which the slaves were kept are illustrated by a report from the early seventeenth century by Jan van der Burgh. Van der Burgh described a particularly devastating epidemic in his report, the details of which are still interesting. In 1625 Bengal was hit by famine and epidemic disease. The slaves brought by Sirisudhammaraja to Arakan died in large numbers. Out of 10,000 persons brought to Arakan 4,000 died within a few months. The higher ranking military commanders, who had received between 400 and 500 slaves as payment from the king, were left with between 50 to 100 slaves each.<sup>113</sup> The smaller traders who had bought 20 to 24 slaves lost practically everything. The VOC merchants tried to keep their slaves alive by separating the sick from the healthy, cleaning the slave quarters twice a day, bathing the slaves everyday and providing them with clean clothes every two days. Slaves were given fresh food, such as chicken, pork, fresh and dried fish, and vegetables. The measures seemed to have no effect as a large number of slaves died from what they thought to be smallpox. The disease manifested itself with large tumours that appeared in the mouth, breast or side. Every single slave that developed such tumours died.<sup>114</sup> The reports of Portuguese missionaries from Bengal for 1625 confirm the outbreak of a great pestilence in

<sup>110</sup> Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie* vol. 3 7-16;58.

<sup>111</sup> NA VOC 1087, fol. 170-172v. Letter from Jan van der Burcht to Coromandel, dated Arakan 5 december 1625 and Diary of Van der Helm 1644, entry for 17 September.

<sup>112</sup> NA VOC 1059, fol. 369-383 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 22 February 1645.

<sup>113</sup> The distribution of slaves from the spoils of war to pay the army was also described by the first British commissioner in Arakan T.C. Robertson in a letter to George Swinton, dated 18 February 1824: 'It is a custom common to the Mugs, ... to give bounty to every man going into actual service. In their own country this practice is I suspect found advantageous to several parties. It enables the sovereign to raise any army without cost and the peaceful subject to purchase an exemption from service, ensures to the individual employed some remunerations for his exertion'. *Precis of the old records of historical interest in the Office of the Commissioner of Arakan* (Rangoon, 1922), pp. 5.

<sup>114</sup> NA VOC 1087, fol. 170-172v. Letter from Jan van der Burcht o Coromandel, dated Arakan 5 december 1625.

Bengal. According to these reports a plague of locusts had destroyed harvests and caused massive starvation, which in its turn had led to the spread of diseases.<sup>115</sup>

### *The nature of bondage in Arakan*

In Arakan different forms of slavery or bondage were in existence throughout our period. M. Aung Thwin has described the nature of slavery in Burma.<sup>116</sup> Jacques Leider has suggested that the analyses of Aung Thwin would also be valid for Arakan.<sup>117</sup> The main question when studying the institution of *Kywan*ship - or bondage - is to whom was the *kywan* bonded and for what purpose. In theory everyone in Arakan was a subject or *kywan* of the king, but in practice there was a wide variety of forms of bondage. *Kywan* could be bonded to the king, to a monastic institution, or to individuals.<sup>118</sup> Leider has suggested that we should reserve the term slave for those who find themselves *kywan* involuntary.

Michael Charney's analyses of the role of the Augustinian monks in Arakan suggests that the distribution of the king's slaves, *man-kywan*, to representatives of the Portuguese clergy such as Manrique were part and parcel of a more general policy of the Arakanese kings to create patronage ties with their subjects.<sup>119</sup> Charney's thesis is supported by evidence from VOC sources. Although not connected to any religious foundation in the early 1640s the VOC's chief in Arakan, Arent van den Helm, received *man-kywan* from the king as well. Arent van den Helm was for example allotted 25 royal slaves for his own use. I would interpret these gifts as a similar attempt to create patronage ties between the VOC's chief and the king. It is interesting to note that such slaves could be taken back by the king at any moment.<sup>120</sup>

The stories of two groups of Dutchmen who had involuntarily become *man-kywan* provide rare insights into the world of slavery in Arakan from the perspective of the enslaved. The stories of these men have been recorded by the VOC chief in Arakan Arent van den Helm in 1645.<sup>121</sup> The first group consisted of the crew of a yacht owned by a Dutch *vrijburgher* from Melaka. In 1643 the ship was captured in Arakanese waters and the crew was condemned as slaves and distributed across the land. Two sailors named Albert Gerritsz. Geus van Amstel, and Thijs Coster van Antwerpen, survived and told their stories to Van den

<sup>115</sup> H. Jossion, *La mission du Bengale Occidental ou Archidiocèse de Calcutta* (Bruges, 1921), p. 1:72.

<sup>116</sup> M. Aung Thwin, 'Athe, Kyun.Taw, Hpayà-Kyun: Varieties of commendation and dependence in pre-colonial Burma', A. Reid ed. *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 64-89.

<sup>117</sup> Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 436-439.

<sup>118</sup> Aung Thwin, 'Athe, Kyun.Taw, Hpayà-Kyun', pp. 67-68.

<sup>119</sup> Charney, *Jambudipa*, pp. 133-143.

<sup>120</sup> The *Daghregister* at Batavia for 24-4-1642 referring to an event early in 1641.

<sup>121</sup> NA VOC 1155 Diary of Arent van den Helm 25 February to 29 October 1645 [*Daghregister 't sedert 25 februari tot 29 oktober 1645*], fol. 759-797.

Helm. They described how after their capture they were taken to the palace in Mrauk U where their names and their belongings were registered in a *parabaik*. The registration of slaves was important as a means to keep track of the population the king controlled, or even more important; to keep track of how many slaves the nobility or the king's vassals had under their command.<sup>122</sup> After having spent almost two weeks in the palace prison they were distributed in small groups to different areas. Van Amstel and Coster were sent to a village in the Lemro valley where they had to work for a group of four families. They worked everyday for a different family and would receive their food from the family they worked for. The labour they were used to perform ranged from pounding paddy, to cutting bamboo, ploughing the land, and other jobs at hand. The families they worked for were described as very poor, the richest person in the village not owning more than one Tanka. The villagers were so poor that it seemed they were often unable to feed their slaves properly. Coster described the business of the village as consisting mainly of cutting bamboo and planting tobacco. Rice was only produced in quantities enough to feed the villagers themselves. The way the villagers treated the slaves is interesting. Coster recounted how they told him that as he was the king's slave and not one of their children they did not feel the need to care properly for him. As a result slaves sent to do heavy agricultural work often died quickly. Van den Helm remarked that the Portuguese and Dutch who were sent as slaves into the woods, by which phrase he meant outside of Mrauk U, disappeared like morning fog on a field.

The other example of the experience as a slave in Arakan is from Adriaan Corneliszoon van Moock Hooploper, a sailor from the VOC ship *Eendracht*. Adriaan spent more than two years working for the Tripura tribe, learning Arakanese and Tripura during his time in captivity. In the source describing his captivity a certain element of dialogue is preserved, with the author, Arent van den Helm, apparently striving to present part of the story in Adriaan's own words. The story of Adriaan's captivity is not only remarkable but also extremely valuable because it happens to be a unique ego-document of a seventeenth century slave in Tripura. The story begins somewhere during the dry season of 1644, when the *Eendracht* is waiting to take her cargo of rice and slaves destined for Batavia and Banda:

We interrogated Adriaan Cornelisz. van Moock Hooploper to find out why he had left his post at the ship *Eendracht* and how he had become a captive in the hands of the

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<sup>122</sup> Cf. NA VOC 1143, fol. 619-620. Translation of a *firman* issued to Luijnenburgh, 1642. '*Jaer den alderhoochsten ende machtichsten Coninck den rycken ende gewesten van Orienten Narabisdigry, Myda Mosa, Coninck van Arracan heer vant gouden hoff, vanden rooden en witten olyphant den onverwinnesten ende den rechten van dit conincryck, Ick mandere alsoo den Capiteyn van den Hollanders soeckt om Nieuwe Bengaelsche slaeven te moogen coopen de heer Sachma, de heren gouverneurs Sicques die te mynder rechter en 's lincker handt syt, Coutewael, Rosy en alle andere mindere regerende persoonen dat soo wanneer den capiteyn den prys van de slaven (die hem toegebracht) gemaect heeft, dat de selve slaeff dan by beyde de Sicques gebracht end ondervraecht moet worden en de namen der selver als mede den naem wiese vercoopt moet opgeschreven worden ende wie dat een ambacht kan laedt hem die niet coopen alsoo dat niet begeer.*'

*Mooghen* [Arakanese]. Van Moock told us that he had been herding some goats for captain Mossel, at the time of his disappearance. He related how he had been accused by bringing food to a runaway shipmate while this boy was hiding in a Pagoda near the river for a few days. ‘This boy told the skipper that he had slept at night in the Pagoda’s, and that I had brought him food during the day. The skipper sent him away in irons and he threatened to punish me with the whip the following morning just as severe as he would the runaway sailor. As the boy was lying about the whole affair (I had never given him a mouth full of food) and I was afraid of the punishment waiting for me the next day, early next morning I was walking in those same fields near the river where I was used to herd the ships goats. Here I met a black Portuguese man whom I had encountered earlier on board the ship where this man had come to sell fowl. I explained to him my problem and he told me I had no reason to be afraid. He suggested that I should go with him to his village and that he would ask the captain on my behalf for forgiveness in one or two days. I accepted his offer and believed that everything would turn out fine. That day we walked through the hills and at night we arrived in a village that he said was his. He treated me very well and made sure I had enough to eat and drink. The next day I asked him to bring me back on board the ship, but he answered that it would be wiser to wait two or three days for the skipper to forget about the whole affair. After I had stayed for five days in the village the black Portuguese told me that we would leave for the skipper, something I was eager to hear and I was ready to go immediately. That day we started out for the ship, accompanied by five big black chaps. After we had been walking for a while, the five black men tied my arms behind my back, as if I were a thief<sup>123</sup>. The same evening we arrived in a big house that rests on golden poles. Here I was examined by a *Moogh* who asked my name and wrote it down. I was now untied and my legs were put in irons (as all the slaves here walk around in irons) and he gave me over to his people. After I had been in irons in this place for twenty days they took me outside during the night and I was brought into the forest, where I have been since then’.

I asked Adriaan, because I assumed he had been examined in the fort by the *Sicque* [*Sit-ke*], if he had never seen me walking around the place. He said: ‘Yes, I saw you there everyday, and when I wanted to call-out to you I was prevented by the guards to do so.’ I am sure that he was registered by the white *Sicque* and was condemned to be thrown into the forest, which must have been approved by the King. I asked him further where he had been brought to, to what nation they had sent him, and how he was received by these people.

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<sup>123</sup> Probably a group of *ko-ran*. Manrique describes how these were used to fetch slaves. According to Manrique they had a function akin to the English rascal, the catchpoll or the Italian sbirri. Manrique, *Itinerario*, 1:277-278.

He told me that the country where they brought him is called *Tiparaes Para Kituer*<sup>124</sup>, and that it is three nights and two days rowing from here. He related how his new masters tried to find someone who would be able to communicate with him, and so he was taken to various places in search of other Dutchmen. ‘Finally, after having visited many white and black Portuguese who could not understand me that well and who told the black man that I did not belong to their people, I was brought to two sick Dutchmen. These two Dutchmen belonged to the captured yacht<sup>125</sup>. One was the merchant Nicolaas van der Graaf, the other one I did not know. They translated my words to the Portuguese that were with them and so my master knew that I was a Dutchman. The next day Van der Graaf died. They cut off his nose and both ears to prove in Arakan that he died. His body was put in a small bamboo hut, where it was torn to pieces by dogs and eventually all the meat disappeared from his bones. Not many days later the other Dutchman died from red diarrhoea. For the same reason his nose and ears were cut off as well. He was put to rest in a similar bamboo shed. A few days after their deaths I was brought back to the place where I had been earlier. Here I was allowed to walk without ball and chain. But they treated me very badly and I was often hit. I was allowed a very meagre meal. The best things I got to eat were half rotten and stinking elephants or buffaloes hides, snakes, snails and toads. Because I could not stand this food I decided to walk to a different place, named Tianen Para, which lies even deeper into this country. I hoped to improve my position in this way, but I was sorely disappointed. And things turned out contrary.

As Adriaan fled to the Hills, further into the jungle, he was picked up by a people, he named *Abasij*.<sup>126</sup> Eventually however the *Abasij* sold Adriaan back to his former owner, who was not at all pleased at having to buy him back. Here Adriaan had to resume his former duties of carrying water, cutting bamboo and pounding paddy.

As was mentioned earlier, one objective of Arakanese slave raiding was to relocate a part of the profitable weaving industry from south-eastern Bengal to the Arakanese heartlands. Bengali slaves from weaving villages were not scattered across the land or divided over Arakanese or Tripura villages like our Dutch examples. It seems that in Arakan these craftsmen and women lived together in Bengali villages. This idea is supported by the fact

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<sup>124</sup> Para meaning Hill in Bengali.

<sup>125</sup> In December 1643 a private Dutch yacht from Melaka was captured by the Arakanese fleet in the river *Samocktoly*. Van der Graaf was the owner of the yacht and he was heading for Chittagong. The capture of the yacht was one of the reasons for the Arakanese-Dutch conflict described in Chapter 6.

<sup>126</sup> For an example of the bamboo burial huts cited by Adriaan see Claus-Dieter Brauns and Lorenz G. Löffler, *Mru. Hill people on the border of Bangladesh* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1986), pp. 190-199.

that VOC sources refer to village headmen as either *talukdar*<sup>127</sup> or *rwa ca*. In one instance for example the VOC's factory was searched for illegal slaves on orders of the king's treasurer<sup>128</sup>. Van den Helm describes how on 26 October 1645 about four to five hundred Bengali and Arakanese village headmen stormed into the factory to search for slaves that ought not to be exported. They found one Bengali girl, from a village of *man kywan*, who was sold to the company illegally by her father with the knowledge of the village's *talukdar*. Van den Helm had paid 14 Tanka for her, of which three Tanka went to the *talukdar*, and two Tanka to the writer of the village who had to falsify the records and register one of the king's slaves as deceased.<sup>129</sup>

The stories of the groups of Dutch slaves, and the example of the Bengali *man-kywan* provide evidence for the way in which slaves were treated, how they were divided over the land, and what kind of labour they had to do. The central role of the king is a striking element in both stories. Slaves were brought to the palace in Mrauk U where a court official, in this case the *lakya-mran*, had their details recorded and decided where they were brought to. Van den Helm noted that these decisions had to be signed by the king. It further seems from the mass of documentation provided by the VOC that control over people was extremely important for the Arakanese king. Meticulous records were kept of how many slaves entered the country and where they were kept. The slaves bought by the VOC were regularly inspected to confirm the company did not export slaves belonging to the king; those who were skilled or had lived in Arakan longer than a year. The mechanisms of the slave trade of course varied over time. During the reign of king Candasudhammaraja (1652-1684) the slave trade became more regulated and subject to tougher controls.

In the introduction to this paragraph I suggested that the demand for slaves by the VOC eventually led to a fundamental change in the nature of the slave trade in Arakan. Before the early seventeenth century the trade in human beings mainly was a by-product of war or a result of poverty. It was a trade driven by supply. Sanjay Subrahmanyam in his article 'Slaves and Tyrants in Mrauk U' explored some aspects of Dutch trade with Arakan during the seventeenth century.<sup>130</sup> Subrahmanyam suggested that the slave trade in Arakan should be thought of as a seventeenth century phenomenon. In my opinion the need for cheap labour for

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<sup>127</sup> From the middle of the seventeenth century the term *talukdar* had become to denote a class of *zamindars* who contracted with the state to realize the revenue of a given territory. S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars under the Mughals' in Alam and Subrahmanyam, *The Mughal State* 285-298, 292. See also B.R. Grover, 'Evolution of the Zamindari and Taluqdari system in Bengal (1576-1765 A.D.) in *Bangladesh Itihas Parishad: Third history Congres Proceedings* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Itihas Parishad, 1973), p. 110.

<sup>128</sup> The dignitary is referred to in VOC sources over the span of 80 years variously as Xama, Cachma, and Sangma or Zangma. I have not been able to determine the corresponding Arakanese title.

<sup>129</sup> NA VOC 1155 Diary of Arent van den Helm 25 February to 29 October 1645 [Dagregister 't sedert 25 februari tot 29 oktober 1645], fol. 759-797.

<sup>130</sup> S. Subrahmanyam, 'Slaves and Tyrants', pp. 201-253.

Batavia and the Spice Islands created a stable and almost insatiable demand for slaves. This demand would fundamentally change the Arakanese slave trade. Dutch demand created a constant and predictable market for slaves in Arakan. This new market stimulated the Portuguese *chatins* operating under the umbrella of the Arakanese king to conduct regular raids on Bengali villages in the Ganges delta. This probably resulted in a different way of slave raiding, smaller in scale but more brutal and unpredictable, aimed at quick profits. It is also clear that slave raiding continued well into the eighteenth century. We lack however any detailed evidence as to the nature of these raids. It is therefore difficult to say if with the disappearance of VOC demand from the Arakanese markets at the end of the seventeenth century the nature of the slave trade changed as well. If a parallel with the Atlantic slave trade is allowed we could observe that in the Americas and the Caribbean the formal abolition of the slave trade did not immediately herald the end of slavery, nor the clandestine trade in slaves. In Arakan the end to slave raiding was probably gradual as well. The available evidence suggests that slave raiding did not disappear after the Dutch left Arakan but perhaps it became more and more sporadic.<sup>131</sup>

#### *8.5 Income from land revenue and trade compared*

Now that we have discussed the functioning and development of two important economic activities in Arakan, the rice and slave trade, it is time to assess the relative importance of the control over south-eastern Bengal in terms of land revenue with Arakanese incomes from trade. The question is essentially how important a source of revenue were Arakan's Bengal dominions in comparison to the income from trade.

The Mughal estimates of the Bengal revenues provide a clear illustration of the wealth of south-eastern Bengal.<sup>132</sup> The first revenue settlement of Bengal made by Todar Mal in 1582 shows the areas which we now know to have been the battlefield between the Arakanese and the Mughals yielded an estimated 2.25 million Rupees, or about 30% of the Bengal revenues. This would include *sarkars* under Arakanese control like Hijli, Jessore, Bakla, the Dhaka area, and of course Chittagong. Chittagong alone accounted for 285,607 Rupees, while the Dhaka area was rated at 987,921 Rupees.<sup>133</sup> The second revenue settlement of Bengal is the 1658 assessment made on orders of Shah Shuja.<sup>134</sup> If we are to follow Eaton, who calculated on average a 100% increase in the revenues of south-eastern Bengal from 1582 to

<sup>131</sup> Roberts, 'An account of Arakan', pp. 130, 133-136, 142-143.

<sup>132</sup> The Mughals clearly used existing accounts and made no settlement of their own. W. H. Moreland, 'Akbar's land revenue arrangements in Bengal', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1926), pp. 43-56.

<sup>133</sup> W. K. Firminger ed., *The 5th report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons in the affairs of the East India Company: dated 28th July, 1812* 3 vols. (Calcutta: R. Cambray, 1917-1918), pp. 2:176-188.

<sup>134</sup> F.D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal and the fifth report, 1812* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), pp. 22-25.

1658/9, the south-eastern Bengal revenues would have grown to c. 5 million Rupees and 50% of Bengal's total revenue, in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>135</sup> Although the underlying figures are sometimes difficult to interpret it is clear that south-eastern Bengal was an important economic centre already in the late sixteenth century, certainly worth the effort of conquering. It seems also clear that Shah Shuja's 1658 settlement was a result of his successful campaign in south-eastern Bengal in 1656 described earlier. In the 1658 settlement several new *sarkars* are added to Todar Mal's list, most of them are most likely recently conquered areas. It is therefore wrong to assume, as Eaton does, that the increase in Bengal revenues should be attributed primarily to economic growth. Mughal revenues saw spectacular increases in the mid-seventeenth century that were at least partly the immediate result of conquest. In fact these newly conquered territories had already from the sixteenth century been part of the economic heart of Bengal.<sup>136</sup>

It would be wrong to assume that the majority of these revenues had all flowed into Arakanese coffers during the first half of the seventeenth century. But it is also wrong to assume that because areas such as Chittagong were included in Mughal revenue accounts since 1582, these areas were actually controlled by the Mughals. On the basis of the reconstruction of the Arakanese-Mughal conflict in the preceding Chapters we can however conclude that a large part of south-eastern Bengal revenues flowed into Arakanese coffers before the middle of the seventeenth century. This corroborates Van der Helm's mid-seventeenth century statements quoted earlier where he argued that the income from Bengal taxes was the most important source of revenue for the Arakanese treasury. Earlier in the seventeenth century the Dutch chief on the Coromandel coast wrote to the VOC's governor-general in Batavia that Bengal was of considerable economic importance to the Arakanese.<sup>137</sup>

British and Mughal revenue settlements of the Chittagong area clearly point to the fact that regular land revenue collection was an important element of Arakanese control over this part of Bengal.<sup>138</sup> The fact that when the British took control over Chittagong the land revenue administration was still based on Arakanese standards provides evidence that revenue extraction from Bengal was organized along the same lines as it was in Arakan itself. In Chittagong land was for instance measured in *Maghi kani*.

Land surveys were made according to Arakanese methods, no maps were used, but the measurements were recorded in a field book. This document was written up in the field by the

<sup>135</sup> Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, p. 199; Firminger, *The 5th report*, pp. 176-188; A. Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan and his times* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1963), pp. 74-81.

<sup>136</sup> Eaton, *The rise of Islam*, pp. 198-203.

<sup>137</sup> NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.

<sup>138</sup> C.H.G. Allen, *Final report of the survey and settlement of the district of Chittagong, 1888 to 1898* (Calcutta, 1900). *Correspondence on the settlement of the Noabad lands in the district of Chittagong* (Calcutta, 1889).



surveyor in a field book which contained the position and dimensions of each plot. The method of the survey was as follows: The surveyor commenced from a starting point, which was usually some recognizable landmark, i.e. a tank or a house. After recording the dimensions of his starting point, a description of the land, the estate to which it belonged and the name of the tenant were recorded. The surveyor then proceeded to measure another plot adjacent to the starting point describing it as to the north, or south etc.<sup>139</sup> The next plot would be one adjacent to the second. All measurements were made with a *nal* or bamboo pole, 12 feet in length. Length and breadth were recorded in *nals*, the product stated in *kahuns*, each *kahun* equalled 16 square *nals*. 7.5 *kahuns* equalled 1 *Maghi kani* or 0.4 acres.<sup>140</sup>

The Mughals moreover used the Arakanese era in fiscal matters.<sup>141</sup> This would lead to the conclusion that the Mughals probably ratified existing estates, which had already been measured by the Arakanese. This is confirmed by the fact that the majority of local *zamindars* reportedly settled in Chittagong from the middle of the sixteenth century when the area was first occupied by the Arakanese.<sup>142</sup> From this evidence we may conclude that regular land rent collection formed part and parcel of Arakanese administration in south-eastern Bengal. As quoted earlier, Talish in the *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* stated that regular accounts of the Bengal revenue with regards to the *sarkars* to the northwest of Chittagong were kept by the Portuguese operating under Arakanese control from Chittagong.<sup>143</sup>

The question that we should ask ourselves now is what share of official income depended on agrarian management and what share was derived from trade. Taxes on trade in Arakan should be estimated at most at 10%. Of this tax 4% went to the king's officials and 6% directly to the king.<sup>144</sup> Cloth taxed was marked with the king's seal. Without the seal the cloth could not be sold on Arakanese markets. In 1665 the VOC negotiated an import tax of only 1%, in return for which they paid the king's treasurer a sum of 220 Rupees annually.<sup>145</sup>

Between 1636 and 1644 VOC return cargoes from Arakan were valued at between

<sup>139</sup> The *cac kham khyak* [land revenue inquest] for Dhanyawati of 1803 proceeds along the same lines. Leider, 'Taxation', pp. 74-76.

<sup>140</sup> Allen, *Final report*, pp. 51-56. The *Maghi kani* probably corresponds to an Arakanese measure of land known as *rhan*. Leider, 'Taxation', pp. 77 and fn. 106.

<sup>141</sup> BL Mss. Add. 29086-29088 Ameen Accounts: a return made in the year 1778 by, a commission for collecting materials or settling the revenue of Bengal, compiled from Native Records, and brought down to A.H. 1183 (1769) 3vols., Mss Add. 29088 fol. 57. *Bengal District Records. Chittagong vol. 1 1760-1773 (Letters received and issued)* ed. W.K. Firminger (Calcutta, 1923).

<sup>142</sup> A.M. Serajuddin, *The revenue administration of the East India Company in Chittagong 1761-1785* (Chittagong, 1971), pp. 189-205.

<sup>143</sup> Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 152a-152b. See also J. N. Sarkar, 'The Feringi pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 AD', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3.6 (1907), p. 425.

<sup>144</sup> NA VOC 1252 fol. 401-416 Letter of Daniel Six to Batavia, dated Arakan 30 January 1665, fol. 408. Cf Leider, 'Taxation', p. 77.

<sup>145</sup> Ibidem.

12,000 and 31,000 guilders a year.<sup>146</sup> This suggests that tax incomes from trade with the Dutch probably amounted to between 800 and 2,500 Tanka per annum. The Dutch certainly were the largest foreign traders in Arakan accounting for the majority of ships entering and leaving the country. If we speculate, we could assume that tax on trade levied on all other traders would probably not amount to much more than taxes levied on VOC trade. This would give a tentative figure for income from trade of c. 5,000 Tanka each year.

Traders of course also brought gifts, which can also be considered as royal revenues from trade. Chinanna Chetti for instance provided in 1640 an exceptionally large present of 6,000 Tanka to the king. Chinanna Chetti was the most important of the Coromandel merchants trading to Arakan. The value of this present was so out of the ordinary that it caused suspicion at the Arakanese court. A different trading mission arriving from Coromandel at roughly the same time for instance brought presents worth 2,000 Tanka.<sup>147</sup> Dutch gifts were more in line with the last figure and were often in kind. Taken together taxes and gifts would probably not amount to more than 10,000 Tanka on a yearly basis.

Tax incomes from trade in Chittagong are difficult to assess. For the early seventeenth century we know that in 1616 the Arakanese king Man Khamaung told the Dutch that during the early years of the seventeenth century Manuel de Mattos had succeeded in generating tax revenue at Dianga of 20,000 Tanka.<sup>148</sup> VOC reports quoted earlier in this Chapter however are adamant in saying that the incessant warfare in south-eastern Bengal drove traders away from Chittagong during the latter part of the seventeenth century. This suggests trade revenues from Chittagong would at least not have grown spectacularly during the rest of the seventeenth century.

If we are now to compare royal incomes from trade with those from land revenues this means income from trade paled into insignificance, even if only Chittagonian land revenue, estimated at between 250.000 and 500.000 Rupees is considered, which as was argued earlier certainly does no justice to the extent of Arakanese control over Bengal. If we add income from the slave trade as another form of revenues the importance of Bengal for Arakan can hardly be underestimated.

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<sup>146</sup> *Dagh-register* vol. 1636, entry for 14 March 1636, pp. 35-25; vol. 1637 entries for 13 February 1637, pp. 41-45, 8 March 1637, pp. 71-73; vol. 1640-1641, entries for 24 January 1641, pp. 167-170, 16 March 1641, p. 211; vol. 1641-1642 entries for 24 April 1642, pp. 140-141, 1 May 1642, p. 145; vol. 1643-1644, entry for 19 March 1644, p. 41.

<sup>147</sup> NA VOC 1134, fol. 183-189 Letter from Arent van der Helm to Batavia, dated Arakan 20 December 1640.

<sup>148</sup> NA VOC 1061, fol. 192r. Letter from Cortenhoeff at Masulipatnam to the chamber Amsterdam, dated 25 April 1616.

*Conclusion*

The establishment of Arakanese control over Chittagong from the late sixteenth century onwards provided the Arakanese kings with a significant source of revenue which enabled them to expand Arakanese royal power across the Arakan-Bengal continuum. Arakan thrived because the Arakanese kings were able to exploit the riches of Bengal from the strategic fortress at Chittagong. These riches consisted of its land revenue, taxes from trade and human resources. The withering of Arakanese control in south-eastern Bengal after 1638 meant that the income from land revenues decreased. Trade had also slowly moved from south-eastern Bengal to the Hugli in western Bengal because of the incessant warfare between the Arakanese and the Mughals. Although in 1645 the volume of VOC trade with Arakan was still believed to be about 500,000 *guilders* (416,000 *tanka*) as compared to 200,000 *guilders* (166,000 *tanka*) for West Bengal.<sup>149</sup>

In this Chapter we have seen how the Arakanese economy declined from the mid 1640s, and collapsed after the loss of Chittagong in 1666. The large scale trade in slaves slowly died out during this period. VOC demand for Arakanese rice almost disappeared when the Dutch found other more easily accessible sources. The departure of the VOC from Arakan had its impact on other merchants; larger merchants from Coromandel followed the Dutch example and stopped their businesses in Arakan. With the disappearance of the Bengal revenues and the departure of the VOC the Arakanese markets dried up. Arakanese royal power that had depended upon the redistribution of the considerable wealth generated by the control over Bengal and taxes from trade was now challenged from within. The country subsequently was torn apart by civil war.

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<sup>149</sup> Zeeuws Archief, Archief van de Staten van Zeeland 2116 I 'Brieven van Gedeputeerden van Zeeland in de Staten-Generaal, met bijlagen (1645)'. Report by Willem Usselinx, The Hague 13 April 1645.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that the rapid rise and decline of the Arakanese state between the early sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth century was closely connected to Mrauk U's ability to control large parts of south-eastern Bengal, especially the area around Chittagong. The Mrauk U kings were successful in tapping into south-eastern Bengal's resources, both human and financial. This was the key to the success of the Arakanese state. The gradual forced withdrawal of royal control over the Chittagong area from the middle of the seventeenth century led to the demise of the Mrauk U state.

Although the early years of the Mrauk U kingdom have to be told in almost mythical accounts we do know that during the fifteenth century the Arakanese kingdom gradually expanded from its nucleus in the Kaladan valley to the rest of the Arakan littoral. The backgrounds of the success of the Mrauk U kingdom are however still unclear. The strategic location of Mrauk U overlooking the two most fertile plains in the Arakan littoral could explain the success of Mrauk U in an Arakanese context. The foundation myths of the Mrauk U kingdom tell the story of the strong bonds between Arakan and Bengal. A century after the foundation of the Mrauk U dynasty it is king Man Pa who is successful in his wars against Chittagong. Man Pa in 1534 defeated a Portuguese attempt to take Mrauk U and in 1542 there is definitive proof of an Arakanese conquest of Chittagong. In 1546 when the Burmese king Tabin-shwei-hti invaded Arakan Man Pa was also able to resist the Burmese force. After the 1550s it seems Arakan again briefly lost control over the area. The conquests of Man Phalaung at the end of the sixteenth century secured Arakan's hold over Chittagong. Man Phalaung, nicknamed the 'Portuguese king', successfully built on the efforts made by Man Pa to forge an alliance with Portuguese renegades operating in the Bay of Bengal. In these same years Mughal forces approached Bengal from the West. As both parties drove their armies towards the economic centre of Bengal a Ninety Years' War over Bengal unfolded. The sixteenth century saw the continued rise to power in south-eastern Bengal of the Arakanese kingdom.

The start of Arakanese rule in Chittagong around 1590 was as we saw closely connected with the development of an Arakanese-Portuguese partnership. The involvement of Portuguese mercenaries in the Arakanese littoral has proved to be instrumental in establishing Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal. From the late sixteenth century Man Raja-kri would continue the expansion of Arakanese rule along the shores of the Bay of Bengal. In 1598 the Arakanese played an important role in the siege of Pegu that would lead to the end of the first Toungoo dynasty in Burma. The early years of the seventeenth century also

witnessed the first confrontations between the Arakanese and the Mughals in south-eastern Bengal.

In the early seventeenth century the campaigns of Islam Khan brought the Mughals to Dhaka. The conquest of Dhaka provided them with a base from where they could control the economic centre of Bengal. The reign of the Arakanese king Man Khamaung at the same time saw several significant victories for the Arakanese in south-eastern Bengal. In the ten years of his reign Man Khamaung campaigned in Bengal practically every year. He extended Arakanese control towards Jessore and Hijli and stopped the Mughal advance at Bhalua. At the same time Man Khamaung's reign saw two Mughal attempts to invade Chittagong. Both attacks failed. The Arakanese now enjoyed considerable influence in and around Jessore and Hijli on the western side of the Brahmaputra, although it is difficult to assess the direct impact of this influence on local rulers. In the following years Sirisudhammaraja would also prove to be a serious opponent for any Mughal governor in Bengal. During his reign Arakanese fleets commanded the deltas of the Ganges and Irrawaddy. The king would actively engage in diplomacy, sending missions to all major powers in the Bay of Bengal, and fitting out his own trading mission at the same time. The mysterious death of the king would however herald the end of the expansion of Arakanese influence in Bengal. At the death of Sirisudhammaraja in the year 1000 of the Arakanese era, Arakanese power in the Bay of Bengal was at its highest point. The reigns following would see the gradual decline of Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal and the collapse of the kingdom.

The reign of Narapati-kri was characterized by several rebellions. His initial victories over his enemies in Arakan and over the Mughals in Bengal were followed by internal struggles that tore the kingdom apart. A major result of these uprisings was the loss of control over the strategically important island Sandwip. The resistance to his rule from members of the old royal family in the Chittagong area and the threat that Chittagong posed as an independent centre of power in the Arakanese kingdom moved Narapati-kri to move against Chittagong. The resettlement of large groups from the Chittagong area to the Arakanese littoral had however not the desired effect. On the contrary Arakan's ability to control south-eastern Bengal was seriously handicapped when as a result of the resettlement several important groups deserted the Arakanese king and moved to areas outside royal control. The next king Satuidhammaraja would be able to restore royal authority to some extent, but Arakan was soon about to lose its grip on south-eastern Bengal. The reign of the next king Candasudhammaraja was long and during his reign the gradual loss of control over Chittagong would lead to the conquest of the city by the Mughals. The loss of Chittagong would eventually even result in the collapse of the Mrauk U state as a whole. In 1656 and 1657 the Mughal prince Shah Shuja moved against south-eastern Bengal and re-established Mughal control over Dhaka. The flight of Shah Shuja to Arakan following the war of

succession in the Mughal empire eventually led to the Mughal invasion of Chittagong in 1666. The substantial revenues from south-eastern Bengal and Chittagong now ceased to flow into Arakanese coffers. In the period that followed the Arakanese kingdom derived its income mainly from the rice trade. The departure of the VOC meant that the king again lost a large part of his income and redistributive powers, as with the VOC also other large merchants left, and the connection with Coromandel was also largely severed. From the reign of Ugga Balla the kingdom descended into anarchy from which it was only to recover briefly in the mid eighteenth century. At the end of the eighteenth century the country would lose its independence and be incorporated in the Burmese empire.

The generally accepted view that Mughal rule in Bengal was established around 1612 is as we saw an oversimplification of the realities on the ground. In fact from the early seventeenth century it was the Arakanese who were able to expand their influence right across south-eastern Bengal. The Arakanese exercised a fluctuating degree of control over much larger areas of Bengal than was hitherto assumed. The reasons why the Arakanese and the Mughals fought such a bitter and prolonged campaign over south-eastern Bengal have been explained from an economic point of view. South-eastern Bengal was the economic heart of the province and yielded considerable revenues, attracting the attention of both states. Throughout the Ninety Years' War it remained a contested region.

The idea of the economic supremacy of south-eastern Bengal dating back only to the sixteenth century should be revised. Changes in the Bengal delta, resulting in the eastward movement of the Ganges took much longer than was assumed by Eaton and had already happened well before the sixteenth century. Chittagong was at least from the fifteenth century the main port to Bengal, so much so that on early maps it was often identified as 'Bengal'. The changes in the delta had earlier indeed resulted in large deposits of silt in south-eastern Bengal enabling an impressive economic development that made the region the granary and centre of cloth industry already in the sixteenth century. Instead of a breakthrough to the east it is more realistic to speak of a move of the economic centre of Bengal to the west. South-eastern Bengal had indeed been the economic centre of Bengal during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the incessant warfare between the Arakanese and the Mughals for control over this prosperous area eventually caused trade and industry to move to the West. The Hugli would become the economic centre of Bengal from the middle of the seventeenth century. The move of the economic and political centre of Bengal to the West could be further investigated using the copious materials left by the Dutch and English East India Companies. VOC material is especially promising in this respect and could be expected to yield much information on the mechanisms involved.

The Arakanese kingdom has come forward as a state that was mainly interested in the control of people. Cities like Mrauk U, Chittagong or Dhaka were located on the agrarian

frontier. Cultivation in the fertile river valleys had not yet reached levels which would make control over or access to arable land central issues. Settling and controlling people on this agrarian frontier was the principle around which the kingdom was organized. The idea that the Mrauk U kingdom was essentially a 'maritime trading state' is not borne out by the analyses of trade in the Arakan-Bengal continuum. The involvement of the king and the nobility in trade was limited. Arakanese interest in trade was seen to intensify only at moments when foreign merchants were thought to impair the king's role in the allocation of rice and people (slaves) in Arakan itself. It is also not correct to view the Mrauk U kingdom merely as a 'robber state'. Images of Arakan as a pirate's nest are based on Mughal perceptions of a kingdom that was a thorn in the flesh of the empire. In Mughal eyes imperial expansion was of course legitimate, while Arakanese expansion was characterized as robbery or piracy. This image has been compounded by late eighteenth century British imperial perspectives when the British were also confronted with 'Arakanese incursions' into 'their' newly acquired territories. It is of course true that by the end of the eighteenth century the character of the Arakanese state had changed considerably. The history of eighteenth century Arakan is however still an area that urgently needs further research which makes it difficult to ascertain in which ways eighteenth century Arakan differed from the period described in this dissertation. It is however clear that the Arakanese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had devised a regular and highly documented system of revenue assessment and collection. This system apparently worked so well that Mughal governors of Chittagong kept on using it throughout the eighteenth century. Arakanese interests in the long term growth of agricultural production by defining landed estates and taxing them to their capacity contradicts the idea that the Mrauk U kings were only interested in quick returns on their campaigns in south-eastern Bengal. In their efforts to control the settlement of people the Arakanese also kept meticulous records of royal service troops. The Mrauk U kings distributed these *man kywan* to local lords and monastic institutions and recorded who had received which person. Each village had its own records enabling the monarch to keep track of population movements and to make sure that the balance of power remained intact. As an indication of the high level of organization of the kingdom its military expeditions to far away areas such as Lower Burma and Dhaka are illustrative of the capacity of the state to organize the complex task of feeding and supplying armies of tens of thousands of men or more. Campaigning far away from the Arakan littoral required planning ahead, stocking supplies and constructing forts along the routes to Burma and Bengal. The failed Mughal invasions of Arakan are excellent examples of how military operations could fail if not enough attention was paid to logistics. In this

respect it is not surprising that the 1666 invasion of Chittagong is explained by Talish in the *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* for a large part in terms of well organized logistics.

It is hoped that the study of Mrauk U chronicles and inscriptions and the development of Arakanese archaeology will benefit from the present study and contribute further to our understanding of the development of the Mrauk U kingdom. Important new research is at present carried out in these fields, the results of which are eagerly awaited.



## MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

### 1 Nationaal Archief (NA), The Hague

#### 1.1 Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), access number 1.04.02.

##### *1.1.1 Correspondence*

Letters exchanged between the Arakan factory and VOC establishments in Asia  
(excluding Batavia)

1608

- Copie missive door Pieter Willemsz. uyt Arracan, ontvangen door den heer Puyck op de rede van Atchin, 6 maart 1608. VOC 1055, fol. 11 – 13.
- Copie missive van Jan Gerritsz Ruyl uyt het schip van Mollicque Tusajer in Atjeh aen de raet der schepen commende in Arracan, 27 maart 1608. VOC 1055, n.f.
- Originele missive van Jan Gerritsz Ruyl uyt Atchin aen Jaques l’Hermite tot Bantam, 20 juli 1608. VOC 1055, n.f.

1610

- Missive van Jan van Wesick uyt Mussilipatnam, 15 juni 1610 [aan ?]. VOC 1055, n.f.

1614

- Copie missive van Andreas Crieck uyt Arakan aen directeur Wemmer van Berchem, 11 december 1614. VOC 1065, fol. 94 – 100.

1615

- Copie missive van Andreas Crieck uyt Arracan aen Samuel Kindt, 12 februari 1615. VOC 1065, fol. 114 – 115.
- Missive van Samuel Kindt uyt Masulipatnam aan de bewindhebbers van de Camer tot Rotterdam, 12 juni 1615. VOC 1062, fol. 37 – 38.

1616

- Originele missive van Andreas Criecke uyt Arracan aen Samuel Kint tot Masulipatnam, 9 februari 1616. VOC 1062, fol. 75.
- Originele missive van Cortenhoeff uyt Masulipatnam aen de camer Amsterdam, 25 april 1616. VOC 1061, fol. 192 – 195.
- Copie missive van Jan Gaeff aen Samuel Kint uyt Bimilipatnam, 27 april 1616. VOC 1061, fol. 171r – 171v.
- Missive van Hans de Haese aen Jan Pietersz. Coen, Masulipatnam 5 juni 1616. VOC 1063, fol. 67-70.

1617

- Originele missive van Jan Gaeff uyt het schip Goes op de custe van Chormandel aen de camer Amsterdam, 1 juni 1617. VOC 1065, fol. 105r – 105v.

1618

- Missive van Hans de Haze uyt Masulipatnam aen Jan Pietersz. Coen, 1 juli 1618. VOC 1068, fol. 333.

1619

- Missive van Hans de Haze aen Jan Pietersz. Coen uyt Masulipatnam, 21 juni 1619. VOC 1069, fol. 452 – 457.

1623

- Originele missive van Hendrick Lambrechts uyt het jacht Medemblick voor Orionton, 5 december 1623. VOC 1083, fol. 188 – 190.

1625

- Missive van Marten IJsbrantsz. Uijt Pulicat aen de camer Amsterdam, 28 april 1625. VOC 1084, fol. 167r.
- Missive van Jan van der Burch nopende de gelegentheyt van Aracan[aan onbekend], 5 december 1625. VOC 1087, fol. 170r -172v.

1626

- Missive aan de Heren Majores van Marten Ysbrants uyt Masulipatnam, 8 april 1626. VOC 1090, fol. 237-244.
- Missive van Marten Ysbrants aan gouverneur-generaal De Carpentier, 4 juni 1626. VOC, fol. 245-248.

1628

- Copie missive van Marinus Lowijssen en Roeloff Corneliszoon Can uyt Arracan aen gouverneur Marten IJsbrantszoon, 21 oktober 1628. VOC 1096, fol. 136 – 137.

1629

- Missive van Marten IJsbrantsz. Uit Pulicat aan Batavia, 2 oktober 1629. VOC 1100, fol. 61 – 62v.
- Missive uyt Masulipatnam van Barent Pietersz aan gouverneur-generaal en Raden., 26 december 1629. VOC 1100, fol. 71-73.

1638

- Copie missive van den coopman Adam van der Mandere aen d'E. Jeremias van der Vliet, 28 februari 1638 mitsgaders twee copie missiven uyt Queda [aan onbekend], 31 maart en 26 februari 1638. VOC 1126, fol. 289 – 290.
- Copie missive [uyt Arraccan] aen d'edele Jeremias van der Vliet, 28 februari 1638. VOC 1127, fol. 382 – 383.

1643

- Copie missive van den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm [uyt Aracan] aen gouverneur Jeremias van Vliet, 22 februari 1643. VOC 1143, fol. 611 – 612.
- Copie missive van Arent van den Helm uyt Aracan aen gouverneur Van Vliet, 18 maart 1643. VOC 1143, fol. 642.

1644

- Copie extract uyt eene missive van Adriaen van der Meijde in Trangebaere zynde aen den gouverneur Arnold Heussen [in Paliacatte aan de Coromandel], 18 augustus 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 474.

1652

- Generale Missive van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, 24 januari 1652. VOC 1182, fol. 15v – 17.

1653

- Copie missive door den commissaris Joan Goesens en zyn raat uyt Arracan naer Bengalen geschreven, 6 maart 1653. VOC 1200, fol. 220 – 223.

1666

- Missive van Johan van Leenen naer Batavia, Chittagong 6 oktober 1666. VOC 1264, fol. 312 – 313.

1677

- Affgaende brieven en verdere documenten van 't comptoir Arracan beginnende ad 21 september 1677 en eyndigende 4 maart 1678. VOC 1350, fol. 76 – 125.

1678

- Affgaende brieven en verdere documenten van 't comptoir Arracan beginnende ad 21 september 1677 en eyndigende 4 maart 1678. VOC 1350, fol. 76 – 125.

1679

- Aenkomende brieven en verdere papieren tot Batavia 't sedert primo december 1679 tot den 10 maart 1680 concernerende Arrakan [volgens apart register]. VOC 1350, fol. 1737 – 1747.

1680

- Aenkomende brieven en verdere papieren tot Batavia 't sedert primo december 1679 tot den 10 maart 1680 concernerende Arrakan [volgens apart register]. VOC 1350, fol. 1737 – 1747.

## Letters sent to Batavia from the Arakan factory

1637

- Copie missive van Adam van der Mandere uyt Arracan aen Gouverneur-Generael Van Diemen en Raden van India ,10 januari 1637. VOC 1125, fol. 477 – 485.

1638

- Copie missive [van Adam van der Mandere aen Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden], november 1638. VOC 1126, fol. 291 – 297.

1640

- Originele missive van Arent van den Helm en Abraham van de Water uyt Arakan aan Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, 20 december 1640. VOC 1134, fol. 183 - 189.

1642

- Copie missive van Arent van den Helm [uyt Aracan] naer Batavia, 31 oktober 1642.VOC 1143, fol. 629 – 634, idem fol. 649-654.

1643

- Originele missive van Arent van den Helm en Abraham van de Water [uyt Aracan] naer Batavia, 22 februari 1643. VOC 1143, fol. 613 – 617.
- Copie missive van Arent van den Helm en Abraham van de Water [uyt Aracan] naer Batavia, 18 maart 1643.VOC 1143, fol. 645 – 646.
- Copie missive van Arent van den Helm en Abraham van de Water tot Arrakan naer Batavia, 30 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 622 – 634.

1644

- Copie missive en register uyt Arraccan naer Batavia aen d'Ed. heer Antonio van Diemen Gouverneur-Generaal en de Raden van India gesonden, 13 februari 1644. VOC 1157, fol. 632 – 640.
- Copie missive door den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm uyt Arracan naer Batavia, 31 oktober 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 493 – 516.

1645

- Copie missive van den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm tot Arraccan naer Batavia, 3 februari 1645. VOC 1155, fol. 479 – 487.
- Verbael van Aracan uyt d'advijzen zedert 6 januari 1645 tot 6 mei 1645. VOC 1158, fol. 175 - 180
- Copie missive van Arent van den Helm uyt Arraccan aen den heeren Raden van India, 31 oktober 1645. VOC 1159, fol. 369 – 383.
- Copie missive door den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm aen den Gouverneur-Generaal, 31 oktober 1645. VOC 1155, fol. 747 – 758.

1646

- Copie missive aen d'Ed. heren raaden van India over den Nederlantsen stant in Orienten door oppercoopman Arent van den Helm en Hendrick ter Horst en Dirck Kemp van

Assinghen, actum in 't Nederlants comptoir Arracan, ultimo oktober anno 1646. VOC 1163, fol. 178 – 191.

1653

- Copie rapport van den commissaris Joan Goossens, 12 juni 1653. VOC 1200, fol. 235 - 252

1654

- Copie missiven aen de Gouverneur-Generaal te Batavia, 25 januari en 1 maart 1654. VOC 1201, fol. 397 – 414.
- Copie missiven door David Verdonck aen Joan Maetsuijker, Gouverneur-Generaal, 25 januari en 1 maart 1654. VOC 1202, fol. 397 – 414.

1655

- Copie missive aen Joan Maetsuijker Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden van India door de coopman Hendrick de Dieu, 8 januari 1655. VOC 1209, fol. 301 – 308.
- Copie missive door Hendrick de Dieu en Gerrit van Voorburgh aan haar Eds. in Batavia, 3 november 1655. VOC 1212, fol. 138 – 168.
- Copie missiven door Hendrick de Dieu aan haar Eds. Tot Batavia geschreven, 24 december 1655 [in tweevoud] en 8 januari 1656. VOC 1214, fol. 190 – 206.

1656

- Copie missiven door Hendrick de Dieu aan haar Eds. Tot Batavia geschreven, 24 december 1655 [in tweevoud] en 8 januari 1656. VOC 1214, fol. 190 – 206.
- Copie missive door Hendrick de Dieu en Gerrit van Voorburgh aen de Ed. heer Joan Maetsuijker Gouverneur-Generaal en d'Ed. heeren Raden van India, 20 november 1656. VOC 1217, fol. 278 – 291.
- Copie missive door Hendrick de Dieu aen de Ed. heer Joan Maetsuijker Gouverneur-Generaal en d'Ed. heeren Raden van India, 22 november 1656. VOC 1217, fol. 293.

1657

- Copie missiven door Hendrick de Dieu en raad tot Arracan naer Batavia, 22 februari en 10 maart 1657. VOC 1221, fol. 469 – 491.
- Copie van eenige bijlagen op missiven naer Batavia, 22 februari en 10 maart 1657. VOC 1221, fol. 492 – 499.
- Copie missiven van den coopman Hendrick de Dieu tot Arracan naer Batavia, 16 november 1657 en 29 maart 1658. VOC 1226, fol. 672 – 691.

1658

- Copie missiven van den coopman Hendrick de Dieu tot Arracan naer Batavia, 16 november 1657 en 29 maart 1658. VOC 1226, fol. 672 – 691.

1660

- Copie missive van de coopman Gerrit van Voorburgh geschreven in Arakan, 24 maart 1660. VOC 1233, fol. 565 – 576.

1661

- Missive door den koopman Gerrit van Voorburgh aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven, 21 januari 1661. VOC 1236, fol. 127 – 134.
- Copie missive van Gerrit van Voorburgh uyt Arakan, 30 januari 1661. VOC 1236, fol. 134 – 137.
- Missive door den koopman Gerrit van Voorburg aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven, 22 februari 1661. VOC 1236, fol. 219 – 221.
- Missive door den koopman Gerrit van Voorburgh aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven, 26 maart 1661. VOC 1236, fol. 887 – 892.
- Missive door den koopman Gerrit van Voorburg geschreven aen haer Eds. tot Batavia, 20 november 1661. VOC 1236, fol. 892 – 901.

1662

- Missive door den resident en coopman Gerrit van Voorburgh geschreven aan haar Ed. tot Batavia 30 januari 1662. VOC 1240, fol. 216 – 224.
- Missive door den resident en coopman Gerrit van Voorburgh geschreven aan haar Ed. tot Batavia ultimo november 1662. VOC 1240, fol. 1555 – 1560.

1663

- Copie authentycq missive van de opperhoofden Daniel Six, Nicolaes Bauckes en Jacob van der Plancken tot Arracan aen den generael en de Raden geschreven den 17 december 1663. VOC 1242, fol. 739 – 747.
- Copie missive door den resident Gerrit van Voorburch en raadt aen haer Eds. in Batavia geschreven, 22 januari 1663. VOC 1243, fol. 35 – 41.
- Missive van Daniel Six uyt Arracan aen den Gouverneur-Generaal Joan Maetsuijcker en de Raden van India, 17 december 1663. VOC 1246, fol. 388.

1664

- Missive van Daniel Six uyt Arracan aen den Gouverneur-Generaal Joan Maetsuijcker en de Raden van India, 8 februari 1664. VOC 1246, fol. 361 – 388.

1665

- Missive van seigneur Daniel Six [en den raadt] aen haer Eds. 30 januari 1665. VOC 1252, fol. 401 – 416.

1677

- Affgaende brieven en verdere documenten van comptoir Arracan beginnende ad 21 september 1677 en eyndigende 4 maart 1678. VOC 1350, fol. 76 – 125.

1678

- Missive door den coopman Jacob van der Plancken mitsgaders den raadt uyt Arracan aen haer Eds. Tot Batavia geschreven, 13 januari 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 918 – 923.
- Missive van de coopman Jacob van der Plancken en raet uyt Arracan aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven, 10 februari 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 926 – 929.
- Brieffje van de ondercoopman Balthazar Hinlopen resident en den raet uyt Arracan aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven, 4 maart 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 940.

- Rapport van den coopman Van der Plancken wegens syn verrigten en wedervaren in ‘t ryck van Arracan aen haer Eds. overgelevert, 14 april 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 933 – 939.
- Missive van den resident Balthazar Hinlopen en raedt in Arracan aen haer Eds., 15 december 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 941 – 944.
- Brieffje van den resident Balthazar Hinlopen en raet in Arracan aen haer edelens, 25 december 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 946.
- Affgaende brieven en verdere documenten van comptoir Arracan beginnende ad 21 september 1677 en eyndigende 4 maart 1678. VOC 1350, fol. 76 – 125.

## 1679

- Brieffken door den resident Balthaser Hinlopen en raet in Arracan aen haer Eds. op Batavia geschreven, 25 februari 1679. VOC 1348, fol. 1111.
- Briefje door den resident Adriaen de Visser uyt Siriang aen haer Eds. tot Batavia, 4 april 1679. VOC 1348, fol. 1230.
- Aenkomende brieven en verdere papieren tot Batavia ‘t sedert primo december 1679 tot den 10 maart 1680 concernerende Arrakan [volgens apart register]. VOC 1350, fol. 1737 – 1747.
- Registertje der Peguese papieren 1679. VOC 1348, fol. 1229.

## 1680

- Aenkomende brieven en verdere papieren tot Batavia ‘t sedert primo december 1679 tot den 10 maart 1680 concernerende Arrakan [volgens apart register]. VOC 1350, fol. 1737 – 1747.
- Missive van den ondercoopman Thomas Stael en den raet in Arracan den 7 januari 1680 aen haer edelens tot Batavia geschreven. VOC 1360, fol. 1426 – 1427.
- Register der papieren, gedateerd Arracan, den 7 januari 1680. VOC 1360, fol. 1426
- Originele missive door den provisioneel resident Anthonij Cramer en raet uyt Arracan den 10 maart 1680 aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven. VOC 1361, fol. 248 - 249
- Missive door den ondercoopman en resident Dirck Vonck mitsgaders den raet uyt Arracan den 17 december 1680 aen haer Eds. tot Batavia geschreven. VOC 1361, fol. 250 – 258.
- Register der papieren 1680. VOC 1361, fol. 248.

## 1681

- Originele missive van den resident Vonck en raad in Arrakan aan haar Eds., 4 april met twee appendixen, 3 en 15 mei 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1205 – 1213.
- Nader originele missive van den resident Vonck en raad in Arrakan aan haar Eds., 13 augustus 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1213 – 1222.
- Originele missive van den resident Vonck en raad in Arrakan aan haar Eds., 29 december 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1222 – 1232.
- Register der papieren 1681. VOC 1361, fol. 250 – 251.

## Letters sent from Batavia to Arakan

1625

- Missive uyt Batavia naer Aracan aen den coopman Paulus Cramerheijn, 24 september 1625. VOC 852 fol. 146v – 148r.

1636

- Missive aen Adam van der Mandere per Ruttem en Oostcappel over Choromandel, 21 juni 1636. VOC 858, fol. 534 – 539.
- Missive aen Adam van der Mandere, 13 september 1636. VOC 858, fol. 778.

1637

- Missive aen Vermandere, 11 september 1637. VOC 859, fol. 797 – 808.
- Missive aen Vermandere [1637]. VOC 859, fol. 831.

1639

- Missive aen Van der Mandere, 6 augustus 1639. VOC 863, fol. 479.
- Missive aen Van der Mandere, 30 september 1639. VOC 863, fol. 600.

1640

- Missive aen Arent van der Helm, 9 augustus 1640. VOC 864, fol. 437.
- Missive aen Arent van der Helm, 13 september 1640. VOC 864, fol. 608.

1641

- Missive aen Arent van der Helm, 19 oktober 1641. VOC 865, fol. 526.

1642

- Missive aen den ondercoopman Gerrit van Luijenburg, 31 mei 1642. VOC 866, fol. 305.
- Missive aen den opperkoopman Arend Jansen van der Helm, 29 september 1642. VOC 866, fol. 633.

1643

- Missive aen van der Helm, 16 mei 1643. VOC 867, fol. 285.
- Missive aen van der Helm, 29 augustus 1643. VOC 867, fol. 637.

1644

- Missive aen Van der Helm, 10 mei 1644. VOC 868, fol. 238.
- Missive aen Van der Helm, 30 augustus 1644. VOC 868, fol. 574.

1645

- Missive aen Van der Helm, 16 juni 1645. VOC 869, fol. 260.
- Missive aen Van der Helm, 2 september 1645. VOC 869, fol. 478.

1654

- Missive uyt Batavia aen Hendrick de Dieu in Arakan [1654], VOC 878, fol. 257-270.



- Missive uyt Batavia aen Hendrick de Dieu in Arakan, 2 oktober 1654. VOC 878, fol. 442-450.

Correspondence with Arakanese kings

1608

- Brief van de koning van Arakan aan de prins van Oranje ongedateerd [1608]. VOC 1055 en VOC 4778.

1614

- Translaat uyt het Perzisch eener missive van den coninck van Arracan aen den Gouverneur-Generaal Pieter Both, 1 december 1614. VOC 1059, fol. 108 – 109.

1615

- Brief aan de keizer van Pegu en Arakan, ongedateerd [1615]. VOC 1059, fol. 59v.

1625

- Brief aan de concinck van Aracan, Batavia 6 augustus 1625. VOC 852 fol. 133v – 134r.

1629

- Copie missive door den coninck van Arracan aen den capitein m[aj]oor van ‘t stene fort van Paliacatte, 19 april 1629. VOC 1098, fol. 494.

1633

- Brief aen den coninck van Arracan, 23 mei 1633. VOC 856, fol. 215r – 215v.

1635

- Brief aen den coninck van Arracan [in het Portugees]. VOC 857, fol. 496 – 497.

1636

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 13 september 1636. VOC 858, fol. 775 – 778.

1637

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 11 september 1637. VOC 859, fol. 809.

1639

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 6 augustus 1639. VOC 863, fol. 485.
- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 30 september 1639. VOC 863, fol. 607..

1641

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 19 oktober 1641. VOC 865, fol. 530.

1642

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 31 mei 1642. VOC 866, fol. 303.

1643

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 16 mei 1643. VOC 867, fol. 296.
- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 29 augustus 1643. VOC 867, fol. 640.

1644

- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 10 mei 1644. VOC 868, fol. 244.
- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 30 augustus 1644. VOC 868, fol. 577.

1645

- Copie translaet missive van den coningh van Arracan anno 1645 aen de heeren Raden van India geschreven. VOC 1155, fol. 798.
- Missive aen den coninck van Arracan, 16 juni 1645. VOC 869, fol. 266.

1649

- Missive voor den conincq van Arracan, 21 oktober 1649. VOC 873, fol. 148.

1676

- Brief aen den coninck van Arracan uyt Pulicat van Anthonij Paviljoen, 18 januari 1676. VOC 1320, fol. 696r.

1677

- Briefje door den coopman Van der Plancken uyt de fluyt Westervelt aen den conincq van Arracan geschreven met het antwoord door gemelte majesteijt daarop, 21 september 1677. VOC 1339, fol. 924.
- Versoeckschrift door coopman Van der Plancken tot bevorderingh van 's compagnies handel in dat rijck aen den conincq overgeschreven mede met het antwoord op deselve in de Portugese tale, 29 en ultimo oktober 1677. VOC 1339, fol. 924 – 925.

1678

- Translaet brieff des conincx van Arracan aen haer Eds. Int Portugees geschreven, 26 november 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 945.

1680

- Translaet briefje des conincx van Arracan aen den Gouverneur-Generaal tot Batavia geschreven, 24 november 1680. VOC 1361, fol. 259.

### *1.1.2 Instructions, commissions and reports*

1608

- Informatie van de bocht van Bengalen en Arracan door Pieter Willemsz in Masulipatnam, 25 Mei 1608. VOC 1055 en VOC 4778.

1610

- Instructie voor Jacob Dirrix Cortenhoeff door den raet in Choromandel gecommitteert om hem naar Arracan te vervoegen. VOC 1055.

1614

- Corte informatie van Dianga en andere plaatsen van Bengalen en andere plaatsen sorterende onder't gebied van den coninck van Arracan, ongedateerd [1614]. VOC 1059, fol. 107r – 107v and VOC 1062, fol. 75.

1615

- Instructie voor de heer Jan Gaeff opperkoopman met het jacht de Duive naar Arracan en Bengalen, 5 mei 1615. VOC 1059, fol. 57r – 57v.
- Instructie voor de heer Andries Crieck opperkoopman op het kantoor Arracan, waar naar hy hem zal hebben te goeverneren, 5 mei 1615. VOC 1059, fol. 58 – 59.
- Informatie in't Corte toucherende voyage op Arracan door Samuel Kindt, ongedateerd [maart 1615]. VOC 1062, fol. 39.

1624

- Instructie van Marten IJsbrant voor de heer Dirck van Haps gaende als capiteyn en hoofd over de fregatten Tannassery en de Bonne Remedie naar Arracan, Pulicat 25 april 1624. VOC 1082, fol. 64 – 65.
- Instructie voor den breeden raet van twee schepen de Vreede en de Medemblick gaende in compagnie naer Arracan alsmeede de twee fregatten leggende in Arracan waer naer hun sullen hebben te reguleren, 25 Augustus 1624. VOC 1082, fol. 66.

1625

- Commissie voor Anthonij Caen van Middelburg met de drie jachten Revengie, Gist en Meulepeert, Batavia 6 augustus 1625. VOC 852, fol. 134r – 135r.

1633

- Commissie voor capityn Adriaan van der Stel gaende met het jacht de Peerl naar Arracan, 23 mei 1633. VOC 856, fol. 214 – 215.

1635

- Instructie voor Adam van der Mandere door Goeverneur-Generaal en Raden, 16 augustus 1635. VOC 857, fol. 492 – 495.
- Instructie voor de schepen gaende naer Arracan, 16 augustus 1635. VOC 857, fol. 495 – 496.

1636

- Instructie voor Lucas Albertsen en Pieter Cocqu met het Spaens Galjone naar Arracan, 16 mei 1643. VOC 867, fol. 282.
- Instructie voor de opperhoofden van de fluit Otter, 13 september 1636. VOC 858 fol. 763.

1643

- Copie verclaringe van 't eijlant Maldijva 1 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 618 – 619.

1649

- Instructie voor Jacobus Hensbroecq, 21 oktober 1649. VOC 873, fol. 148-147.

1650

- Commissie voor den coopman Pieter Coqui gaende met drie jachten en een chaloupe naar Arracan, 23 augustus 1650. VOC 874, fol. 326 – 327.
- Instructie voor den coopman Pieter Cocquij en voor den raedt van de jachten Delfshaven, Cleen Batavia en Troostenburgh en de Chaloupe Siam ... om te cruysen langs de custe en stromen van Arracan, 28 augustus 1650. VOC 874, fol. 327-334.

1652

- Instructie en ordre waer naer haer d'opperhoofden van de jachten Johan Baptista en de Catt en het fluytschip den Osch gedurende haer reyse naar Arracan als anders te hebben reguleren, 7 oktober 1652. VOC 876, fol. 704 – 709.
- Instructie voor Joan Goessens, 7 oktober 1652. VOC 876, fol. 709 – 727.

1653

- Copie rapport van de commissaris Joan Goessens, 12 juni 1653. VOC 1200, fol. 235 – 252.

1665

- Rapport van seigneur Daniel Six 13 december 1665. VOC 1253, fol. 1922 – 1934.

1667

- Johan van Leenen, Aanwysingh van de nieuwe vaert, beginnende uyt de revier van Arracan noortwaerts naar Exettigam en tot Decca in Bengale, en weder tot de rhee van Bellasoor, soo also deselve met de jachten Lantsmeer en Purmerlant ter ordre van hare hoogachtbare ed. tot Batavia sy bevaeren en deselver retournement aen hooghgemelte haer eds overgegeven (1667). VOC 1264, fol. 337 – 339.
- Rapport van Johan van Leenen commandeur van de schepen Landsmeer en Purmerland gezonden ter assistentie van de Conincq van Hindoostan in syn oorlogh tegen die van Arracan, Batavia 2 juli 1667. VOC 1264, fol. 328 – 336.

1678

- Instructie door den coopman Van der Plancken op syn vertreck uyt Arracan aen den ondercoopman sr. Balthasar Hinloopen, en den boekhouder Jan Reijnen, waer naer hun ten diensten van de E. Comp. op 't comptoir Arracan tot nader ordre van den Edle. heer gouverneur-generaal Joan Maetsuijcker en d'E.E. heeren Raden van India sullen hebben te reguleren, 10 februari 1678. VOC 1339, fol. 929 – 932.

1681

- Rapport door den adsistent Anthoni Cramer wegens de constitutie des comptoirs Arracan aen haer Eds. Tot Batavia overgelevert den 9 februari 1681. VOC 1361, fol. 259 – 268.

1682

- Memorie door den ondercoopman Dirck Vonck den Fransman Ledue in Arracan 't sijner naricht gelaten, 29 december 1682. VOC 1377, fol. 1250 - 1251

1683

- Rapport door den ondercoopman en gewesen Arracans resident Vonck aan haar Eds. tot Batavia, 30 januari 1683. VOC 1377, fol. 1241 – 1249.

### *1.1.3 Resolutions and consultations*

1614

- Copie resolutie genomen tot Arracan, 11 september 1614. VOC 1065, fol. 121.

1643/44

- Copie resolutien getrocken op 't comptoir Araccan [gedateerd den 30 januari 1643]. VOC 1143, fol. 638 – 641.
- Copie resolutien, 15 september, 20 en 23 oktober 1643 geresolveert int Nederlantsch comptoir Arracan. VOC 1151, fol. 620 – 621.
- Copie resolutien, 11 december 1643 en 8 februari 1644. VOC 1157, fol. 643 - 644
- Copie resolutie getrocken, 19 juli 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 491.

1656

- Copie resolutie, 21 november 1656. VOC 1217, fol. 292 6 augustus 2007

### *1.1.4 Diaries*

1644

- Extract uyt het daghregister gehouden door den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm van 't gepasseerde in 't coninckrijck Arracan 't sedert 19 februari tot 30 oktober 1644. VOC 1149, fol. 524r – 567v.

1645

- Daghregister gehouden bij den oppercoopman Arent van den Helm sedert 26 februari tot 29 oktober 1645 daer aen volgende. VOC 1155, fol. 759 – 797.

1650

- Extract uyt het daghregister onser Arracanse voyagie met 't jacht de Leeuwerecq den 22 oktober 1649 aangevangen synde 't notabele soo ons uyt selve ryck is wervaren van Jacobus Hensbroeck, sedert 5 januari tot 9 maart 1650. VOC 1177, fol. 124 – 195.

1663

- Extract uyt het daghregister tot Arracan sub datis 25, 26, 27, 29, 30 en 31 juli 1663 rakende 't onthoofden van de [prins] Chiasousas kinderen gehouden. VOC 1242, fol. 748 – 750.

### *1.1.5 Treaties and Royal decrees*

1635/1642

- Translaedt van verscheijden firmans vergundt door den coninck in Arracan [van 1635 tot 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 619 – 620.

- Translaedt van verscheijden firmans vergundt door den coninck in Arracan [van het jaar 1635 tot 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 636 – 637.
- Translaet van ‘t ferman door den coninck van Arracan aen de E. compagnie verleent, getranslateert 26 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 617.

1643

- Translaet Firmaen, 26 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 617.

1653

- Copie articulen gemaect met den coninck van Arracan, 22 maart 1653. VOC 1200, fol. 253 – 255.

#### *1.1.6 Invoices and bills of lading*

1636

- Factura's en cognossementen [gedateerd ultimo januari 1637, 11 januari 1637, 24 december 1636, 1 februari 1636]. VOC 1125, fol. 486 – 490.

1642

- Copie factura [gedateerd Aracan, den ultimo oktober 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 621.
- Copie factura [gedateerd Aracan, den ultimo oktober 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 635.
- Copie cognossement [gedateerd den ultimo oktober 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 618.
- Copie cognossement van de cargasoenen versonden per ‘t schip de Neptunus, gedateerd ultimo oktober 1642. VOC 1151, fol. 676.

1643

- Factura en cognoissement van ‘t gescheepte per ‘t schip ‘t Spaens Galjoen, gedateerd 30 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 612 – 614.
- Cognossement [gedateerd den 22 februari 1643]. VOC 1143, fol. 625.
- Factura en cognoissement van ‘t gescheepte per ‘t schip ‘t Spaens Galjoen, gedateerd 30 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 612 – 614.

1644

- Copie factura van ‘t cargasoentjen gescheept in ‘t schip de Snoecq, gedateerd ultimo oktober 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 492.
- Factura en cognossement van het gescheepte cargasoen in ‘t fluytschip de Eendracht 13 februari 1644. VOC 1157, fol. 641 – 642.
- Copie cognoissement van ‘t gescheepte int schip de Snoecq, gedateerd ultimo oktober 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 473

1645

- Copie facture vant cargasoen gescheept in de fluyt Uijtgeest, 3 februari 1645. VOC 1155, fol. 488.

- Factura en cognossement, ultimo oktober 1645. VOC 1159, fol. 398 – 390.
- Copie cognossement van 't gescheepte in de groote fluyt Uijtgeest, 3 Februari 1645. VOC 1155, fol. 478.
- Factura en cognossement, ultimo oktober 1645. VOC 1159, fol. 398 – 390 .

1646

- Cognossement en een factura van het geladene in 't fluytschip Uijtgeest, actum in Nederlants comptoir Arracan, ultimo oktober 1646. VOC 1163, fol. 192 – 193.

### *1.1.7 Ships ledgers*

1612

- Reckeninge van het jacht Groene Papegaie in Arracan gehouden door Jacob Dirrix van 8 januari tot 8 maart 1612. VOC 625.
- Reckeninge van het jacht Groene Papegaie in Masulipatnam gehouden door Jacob Dirrix van 14 juli tot 6 september 1612. VOC 648.

1642

- Copie van oncostenreeckeningh van 't schip d'Neptunus [gedateerd Aracan den ultimo oktober 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 622 – 624.
- Copie van oncostenreeckeningh van 't schip d'Neptunus [gedateerd Aracan, den ultimo oktober 1642]. VOC 1143, fol. 626 – 628.

1643

- Oncostenreeckqueningh van 't fluytschip den Dolfijn [gedateerd Aracan, den 22 februari 1643]. VOC 1143, fol. 647 – 648.
- Copie oncostreecqueningh van 't schip 't Spaens Galjoen, 30 oktober 1643. VOC 1151, fol. 615 – 616.

1644

- Copie reecqueninge van oncosten gedaen aen 't schip de Snoucq, ultimo oktober 1644. VOC 1155, fol. 475 – 477.
- Copie reeckeningh van oncosten vant fluytschip d'Eendracht, gedateerd 13 februari 1644. VOC 1157, fol. 645 – 646.

1645

- Copie reecqueninge van oncosten gedaen aen 't schip Uijtgeest, ultimo januari 1645. VOC 1155, fol. 489 – 490.
- Copie reecqueninghe van oncosten, verstreckt aen 't jacht Oudewater, 31 oktober 1645. VOC 1159, fol. 384 – 385.

### *1.1.8 Other*

1614

- Belijdenisse van een vrouw in Arracan in het proces Cortenhoef. VOC 1065, fol. 116.

- Attestatien contra Cortenhoef. VOC 1065, fol. 117 – 120.
- Bekentenisse van den crany ofte schrijver op het comptoir Arracan van ‘t Godloos en ongeregelt huys gehouden soo by Cortenhout als by syn oppercoopman Pieter Claesen Lobbesen. VOC 1065, fol. 122.
- Sententie aengaende Jacob Dircxz. Coertenhout, ondercoopman. VOC 1065, fol. 123.

1636

- Verklaring van Adriaen van der Stel, 1 februari 1636. VOC 1125, fol. 489.

1637

- Verklaring van de schipper en coopman op het schip Oostcappel, 11 januari 1637. VOC 1125, fol. 490.

1643

- Lyste van de namen der Duytsche comende in december 1643 van Malacca. VOC 1159, fol. 388.
- Balance van de lopende en geslote negotieboecken van 1643 [gedateerd Aracan, den 15 maart 1643]. VOC 1143, fol. 643 – 644.

1663

- Twee attestatien rakende de gestalte van ‘t jacht de Goutsblom, 25 oktober en 26 december 1663. VOC 1242, fol. 751 – 753.

1680

- Attestatie door schipper Harman Springer benevens desselfs opper en onderstuyrluyden verleent wegens de diepte en gelegentheyt der Arracanse rivier. VOC 1361, fol. 258 – 259.

1681

- Verclaringe van d’opperhoofden van ‘t schip Den Briel wegens desselfs verongelucken, 20 oktober 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1233 – 1236.
- Andere verclaringe der opperhoofden wegens ‘t verongelucken van ‘t schip Den Briel, 20 oktober 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1238 – 1240.
- Klaghten van den schipper van ‘t schip Den Briel over syn stierluyden aen ‘t opperhoofd en den raet in Arrakan den 26 december 1681. VOC 1377, fol. 1236 – 1238.

## 1.2 Maps from the catalogue Leupe

- Graaf, Isaak de. Kaart van de Rivier van Arracan, van de Mond tot de Stad van dien naam [n.d.]: 1:281,300. VEL 261.
- Idem, De Bocht van Bengalen / Aracan / Pegu [n.d.]: 1 : 1,880,901. VEL 257.
- Idem, Kaart van Bengalen [n.d.]: 1 : 1,124,852. VEL 256.
- Kaart van de Rivier de Ganges getrocken uyt een Moorsche Kaart. VEL 259.



**1.3 Collectie Alting, 1596-1800, access number 1.10.03**

1625

- Instructie voor den koopman Jan van den Borgh, cum suis, gaande naar Arracan mede gegeven, 22 september 1625. Alting 8, 'Register der memorien, door afgaande gouverneurs van verschillende gewesten aan hun opvolgers nagelaten (1620-1750): Coromandel', fol. 167.

1643

- Translaet firman door den koning van Aracan aan den opperkoopman Arent van der Helm verleend, 26 oktober 1643. Alting 1, 'Generaal register der Indische tractaten 1596-1758', fol. 137.

1653

- Poincten en articulen door den koopman Jan Goosens aan den koning van Aracan tot voltrekking van de vrede opgegeven met het antwoord op deselve, 22 maart 1653. Alting 1, 'Generaal register der Indische tractaten 1596-1758', fol. 235.

**1.4 Collectie Rademacher, access number 1.10.69**

1650

- Specieboek van alle maten, gewigten, en gelden so in India ter plaetse alwaer de E: Compagnie negotieert werden gerekent (c. 1650). Rademacher 467.

**1.5 Archief der Staten-Generaal, access number 1.01.07**

1628

- Rapport van den gewesenen gouverneur Carpentier van degelentheyte der saecken in d'Oost Indien ten tijde van syn affscheyt aen haer hoog mogenden overgelevert den 29 september 1628. Archief van de Staten-Generaal 12581.13 (1254). 'Secrete Casse der Oostindische Compagnie'.

## **2 Zeeuws archief, Middelburg**

1645

- Memorie van Willem Usselincx, Den Haag 13 april 1645. Archief van de Staten van Zeeland 2116 I. 'Brieven van Gedeputeerden van Zeeland in de Staten-Generaal, met bijlagen (1645)'.

## **3 Leiden University Library**

1680

- De reevier van Rakan Anno 1680. Collectie Bodel Nijenhuis COLLBN 006-15-013.

## **4 British Library (BL), London**

### **4.1 Oriental and India Office collections (OIOC)**

- Buchanan [-Hamilton], dr. F. Copy of a journal of progress and observations during the continuance of the deputation from Bengal to Ava in 1795 in the dominions of the Barma monarch. OIOC Mss. Eur. C 13.
- An abstract of the journal of a voyage to the island of Yaky or Cheduba and the Arracan coast in the months of January and February 1788 by Reuben Burrow. OIOC Mss. Eur. D 106.
- Translation of a letter from the Rajah or principal of the Burmas to the collector of Chittagong, 9 May 1787. OIOC Mss. Eur. D 151.
- Salimullah, *Tarikh-i Bangala*. OIOC Mss. 478
- Pemberton, R.B. and F. Jenkins, 'Survey of Arakan (Aeng pass) 1831'. OIOC, Jenkins Collection Mss. Eur. F 257 vol. 1.
- East India Company, Original Correspondence. OIOC E-series.
- East India Company, Dhaka Factory Records. OIOC G/15/1.
- East India Company, Bengal Secret Consultations. OIOC P/A/42.
- Prinsep, James (1799-1840), Moored Arakanese boats c. 1828, Watercolour 15 by 5 cm. OIOC Prints and Drawings WD 4219.

## 4.2 Manuscripts

- *Portelano* (1508). Mss. Egerton 2803.
- Rotz, J. *Book of Idrography* (1542). Mss. Royal 20 E. ix.
- Haynes, J. A. Copie of a Journall of our voyage from Bengal to Madras commencing on 8 November 1688, concluding on 3 March 1689 with letters received from and concerning Captain William Heath's transactions in Ye. Right Honourable Companies affaires. Mss. Egerton 283.
- [Roberts, Major R.E.], 'History of the Mugs, people of Arracan, June 1777'. Mss. Add. 29,210 (2), fol. 51 – 69.
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- Geographical account of Arracan. Mss. Add. 14,382, fol. 101 – 106.

### Maps

- A topographical plan of the city and fortifications of Arracan by Robert Wroughton, 1825: 1:12,000. Mss. Add. 57,699 (2).
- Reconnoitring sketch of a portion of Arracan by Lieutenants Wroughton and Thomson, 28 February 1825: 1:126720. Mss. Add. 57,699 (1).

## 5 Bodleian Library, Oxford

- Talish, Shihab ud-Din. *Fathiyyah-i-ibriyyah* [The victories that give warning] Bodleian Library, MS. Bod. 589, folia 106 – 176v.

## 6 Bibliothèque National, Paris

- Extract of an Arakanese chronicle. Mss. Anglais 26.

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## APPENDIX

ARAKANESSE KINGS FROM 1404 TO 1700<sup>1</sup>

Man Co Mwan (1404-1433)  
 Ali Khan (1433-1459)  
 Bhaco phru (1449-1481)  
 Do lya (1481-1491)  
 Bha-cui-nui (1491-1493)  
 Ran On (1494)  
 Calanka-su (1494-1501)  
 Man Raja (1501-1513)  
 Gajapati (1513-1515)  
 Man Co, the elder (1515)  
 Sajata (1516-1521 ?)  
 Man Khon Raja (1521-1531)  
 Man On-lha (?)

Man Pa (1531-1553)  
 Man Thikkha (1553-1556)  
 Man Co-lha (1556-1564)  
 Man Cakrawate (1564-1571)  
 Man Phalaung (1571-1593)  
 Man Raja-kri (1593-1612)  
 Man Khamaung (1612-1622)  
 Sirisudhammaraja (1622-1638)  
 Man Cane (1638)

Narapati-kri (1638-1645)  
 Satuidhammaraja (1645-1652)  
 Candasudhammaraja (1652-1684)  
 Ugga Balla (1684-1685)  
 Waradhammaraja (1685-1692/3)  
 Manisudhammaraja (1692-1694)  
 Candasuriyadhammaraja (1694-1696),  
 Noratha (1696)

Maruppiya (1696-1697)  
 Kalagandhat (1697-1698)  
 Naradhipati (1698-1700).

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<sup>1</sup> This list is based on Leider, *Le royaume d'Arakan*, pp. 492-494. The dates of kings prior to Man Raja-kri are indications that may need correction following ongoing epigraphic research carried out at present by Jacques Leider and Kyaw Minn Htin.



## **SAMENVATTING**

### **ARAKAN EN BENGALen**

#### **DE OPKOMST EN ONDERGANG VAN HET KONINKRIJK VAN MRAUK U (BIRMA), VANAF DE VIJFTIENDE TOT EN MET DE ZEVENTIENDE EEUW AD**

Dit proefschrift beschrijft de opkomst en ondergang van het Mrauk U koninkrijk in Arakan (Birma) vanaf de vijftiende tot en met de zeventiende eeuw AD. Het belang van Arakanese controle over Zuidoost Bengalen komt daarbij naar voren als het belangrijkste gegeven dat aan de ene kant de snelle expansie van het koninkrijk van Mrauk U kan verklaren, alsmede aan de andere kant een goede verklaring biedt waarom aan het einde van de zeventiende eeuw het rijk in korte tijd ineen stortte.

Hoewel het Mrauk U koninkrijk in de zeventiende eeuw een belangrijke machtsfactor was in de Golf van Bengalen is de geschiedschrijving over Arakan lange tijd beperkt gebleven tot de resultaten van onderzoek door Britse koloniale ambtenaren uit de negentiende eeuw zoals Charles Paton en Arthur Phayre aangevuld met dat van wetenschappers zoals D.G.E. Hall uit de vorige eeuw. Van recenter datum zijn de studies van Pamela Gutman, Michael Charney en Jacques Leider. Het gebrek aan aandacht voor de geschiedenis van Arakan kan aan de ene kant verklaard worden door het feit dat Arakan zich niet heeft ontwikkeld tot een nationale staat en aan de andere kant doordat het in de postkoloniale periode gesitueerd werd op het kruispunt van de 'South- and Southeast Asia Studies'. Arakan bevond zich daarmee in een soort wetenschappelijk niemandsland. De wetenschappelijke heroriëntatie op de Golf van Bengalen als object van studie in de jaren negentig van de twintigste eeuw maakte echter duidelijk dat de Noordkust van de Golf van Bengalen goeddeels een witte vlek vormde voor historici van Azië. De vragen naar de ontwikkeling van het Mrauk U koninkrijk en het effect van de Arakanese expansie en ondergang op naburige staten in de Golf van Bengalen zoals het Mogol rijk en de aangrenzende Birmese Toungoo staat vormden dan ook een belangrijke motivatie voor het doen van onderzoek voor deze dissertatie.

Het belang van deze studie strekt zich dus uit tot een gebied dat veel groter is dan de provincie Arakan (Rakhaing in het Birmees) in het huidige Birma. In de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw controleerden de koningen van Mrauk U een gebied dat zich uitstreekte van aan de ene kant Pegu en de Irrawaddy delta in Birma en aan de andere kant Dhaka en de

Ganges-Brahmaputra delta in het hedendaagse Bangladesh. De impact van die Arakanese controle op het Birmese Toungoo keizerrijk en het Indiase Mogol rijk werd tot nog toe onderschat.

Deze studie leunt sterk, doch niet uitsluitend, op Nederlandstalig bronnenmateriaal uit de archieven van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie. De eminente historicus van Zuidoost Azië D.G.E. Hall was de eerste onderzoeker die het belang van (gepubliceerd) Nederlandstalig bronnenmateriaal voor de bestudering van de vroegmoderne geschiedenis van Arakan onder de aandacht bracht van de destijds veelal Engelstalige specialisten op het gebied van de studie van Birma. Hall concludeerde reeds dat de verovering van de, voorheen Arakanese, entrepôt Chittagong door de Mogols in 1666 waarschijnlijk van cruciaal belang is geweest voor de ondergang van het Mrauk U koninkrijk aan het einde van de zeventiende eeuw. In meer of mindere mate zijn de conclusies van Hall wat dit betreft later onderschreven door Charney en Leider. Charney ziet voortbouwend op het werk van Hall het Mrauk U koninkrijk vooral als een *'maritime trading state'* en ook Leider benadrukt in zijn studie over Arakan het belang van de overzeese handel voor de bloei en ondergang van het koninkrijk. De analyse van de overzeese handel van Arakan in de onderhavige studie laat echter duidelijk zien dat de inkomsten uit deze tak van de economie van marginaal belang waren voor de koningen van Arakan in vergelijking met de inkomsten uit de Bengaalse bezittingen en onderhorigheden. Arakan controleerde gedurende een groot deel van de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw een veel groter gebied van Bengalen dan tot nog toe werd aangenomen. Dit gebied strekte zich uit van de streek rondom Dhaka tot Chittagong. De expansie van de Arakanese staat in de richting van Bengalen en het geleidelijke verval van de Arakanese controle over dat gebied worden in deze studie in detail beschreven en geanalyseerd.

Het belang van Bengalen voor Arakan komt reeds goed tot uitdrukking in de vele, vaak mythologische, verhalen in Arakanese kronieken over het ontstaan van het Mrauk U koninkrijk aan het begin van de vijftiende eeuw. In deze verhalen wordt de Arakanese koning Man Co Mwan (c.1404-1432) bijgestaan door een Bengaalse sultan (Jalal ud-Din Muhammad Shah, 1415-1432) wanneer hij vanuit ballingschap in Bengalen de troon van Arakan verovert.

De groei van het Mrauk U koninkrijk in Arakan valt samen met de komst van Portugese handelaren in de Golf van Bengalen. De koningen van Arakan slaagden er in sterke allianties te vormen met deze handelaren die veelal opereerden buiten de context van de *Estado da Índia*. Tegelijk met de expansie van het Mrauk U rijk naar Oost Bengalen in de zestiende eeuw drongen de Mogols West Bengalen binnen. Gedurende ongeveer negentig jaar

zouden deze twee partijen elkaar de controle over Bengalen betwisten. Het gebied rondom Dhaka, het economische centrum van Bengalen vanaf de zestiende eeuw, was de inzet van deze strijd. In dit gebied werden de hoogste belastingopbrengsten gerealiseerd; controle over Dhaka was daarom de inzet van de strijd tussen de Mogols en de koningen van Mrauk U. De dood van koning Sirisudhammaraja in 1638 en de daarop volgende dynastieke revolutie markeren een keerpunt in de strijd om de rijkdom van Bengalen. De nieuwe Arakanese dynastie, onder leiding van koning Narapati-kri, die in dat jaar de controle over Mrauk U overnam veranderde het beleid ten aanzien van de Portugese gemeenschappen en de Bengaalse bezittingen radicaal. In een poging de macht van Chittagong te breken begon hij een ontvolkingspolitiek in Chittagong, met als doel de bevolkingsdichtheid van centraal Arakan en dan met name de Kaladan vallei drastisch te verhogen. Dit beleid mislukte op een aantal fronten. Ten eerste werd een aantal groepen cruciaal voor de uitoefening van de macht van Mrauk U in Bengalen structureel vervreemd van het Arakanese hof en ten tweede zorgde de verplaatsing van grote groepen mensen voor een sterke inflatie en hongersnood in de Kaladan vallei en een toename van etnische spanningen tussen Bengalesen en Arakanesen. Geleidelijk aan verzwakte nu de positie van de koningen van Arakan. Het hof in Mrauk U zou de komende jaren sterk aan invloed inboeten, niet alleen in Bengalen, maar ook in Arakan zelf. De sterk verminderde belastinginkomsten uit Bengalen, alsmede het verlies van de steun van een groot deel van de Portugese gemeenschap zullen ongetwijfeld belangrijke redenen geweest zijn voor dit verlies aan invloed. De verovering van Chittagong in 1666 door de Mogols is in dit licht ook een logisch vervolg op het verval van de Arakanese invloed in Bengalen. De achteloze manier waarop in Arakanese kronieken het verlies van Chittagong wordt beschreven behoeft daarom ook geen verbazing te wekken. Het verlies van Chittagong was immers de culminatie van een proces dat reeds enige decennia aan de gang was. De jaren na 1666 werden gekenmerkt door economisch verval. Het positieve beeld dat tot nog toe werd geschetst van deze periode blijkt in hoofdzaak gebaseerd op de beschrijving van Arakan door de Haarlemse scheepschirurgijn Wouter Schouten. Op grond van dit proefschrift moet de regering van koning Candasudhammaraja (1652-1684) worden gezien als een periode van neergang, eindigende in een burgeroorlog die nog decennia zou duren. Het verlies van controle over Bengalen, dat begon na 1638, betekende kortom tevens het begin van het einde van het Mrauk U koninkrijk zoals dat tussen de vijftiende en zeventiende eeuw gefunctioneerd had.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Stephan van Galen was born 12 May 1971 in Heemskerk, the Netherlands. He received his secondary education from 1983 to 1987 at the Rynlands Lyceum Oegstgeest and from 1987 tot 1989 at the Strabrecht College in Geldrop. In 1989 he enrolled at Leiden University to study History. In 1992 he went to London to read Imperial History at King's College. He graduated from Leiden University in 1995. In 1995 he won a VSB-scholarship and returned to London to study South Asian History with a minor in Farsi at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He obtained his M.A. from SOAS in 1996. In 1996 he started his research on Arakan in the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library, first as a research assistant and later as a PhD student at Leiden University. The same year he became a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society. From 1997 research focussed on source material available in the archives of the Dutch East India Company in the National Archives, The Hague. In 1999 he travelled to Burma to do research in Arakan itself. In 2001 he became editor for mainland Southeast Asia with the Newsletter of the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) and started work for the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) as policy advisor, first on Quality Assurance later for Research Policy. In 2003 he joined the newly created Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The organisation was established by international treaty and ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders.

Stephan van Galen lives in Leiden and is married to Tanja Steegstra, with whom he has two children: Jan (2003) and Ella (2007).

## Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift

### Arakan and Bengal

#### The rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century AD

1. The year 1000 of the Arakanese era marks a decisive turning point in Arakanese history. The dynastic revolution following the death of king Sirisudhammaraja brought a radical revision of Arakanese policy with regard to Arakan's Bengal dominions that would eventually result in the collapse of the Arakanese state at the end of the seventeenth century.
2. The ability of the Arakanese kings to forge alliances with Portuguese *chatins* living in the Bay of Bengal was crucial to the success of the Arakanese kingdom. The reversal of Arakanese policy towards the Portuguese community in Arakan and Bengal from 1638 conversely was partly responsible for the decline of the Mrauk U kingdom.
3. The move of the Mughal capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Rajmahal in the late 1630s was occasioned by the Mughal's inability to impose their control on south-eastern Bengal, faced as they were with Arakan's power.
4. From the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century the economic centre of Bengal was located in the Dhaka area. The mass of archival records left by the European trading companies has focused the attention of historians of Mughal Bengal on West Bengal, neglecting developments taking place on the axis Dhaka-Chittagong.
5. The slave trade in Bengal fundamentally changed in character by the large and sustained demand from the Dutch East India Company (VOC) starting in 1623. Dutch demand meant that the trade in slaves evolved from supply to demand driven.
6. Arakanese rice exports were of crucial importance for the survival of Batavia as the main Dutch entrepôt in Asia between 1627 and 1657.
7. Pala art from Bengal had a strong influence on the development of the iconography of Early Pagan (c. 850-1120). Cf. Paul Strachan, *Pagan. Art and Architecture of Old Burma* (Oxford: Kiscadale, 1996), p. 21.
8. The parallels observed by Victor Lieberman between historical developments in Japan, Eurasia and mainland Southeast Asia are not strange at all. Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels. Southeast Asia in Global context, c. 800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
9. Southeast Asia did not witness an 'Age of Commerce' in the early modern period (contra Anthony Reid, 'An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.1 (1990).).

10. There was no seventeenth century crisis in Southeast Asia in the sense as argued by A. Reid in 'The seventeenth-century crisis in Southeast Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.4 (1990), pp. 639-659.
11. The external evaluation of scientific research in The Netherlands as carried out along the principles of the 'Standaard Evaluatie Protocol' (SEP) cannot in general be viewed as independent, nor does it seem to provide a rigorous account of how public money is spent on research. The sudden erosion of evaluation scores after 2003 provides the best proof of this statement. Cf. "*Trust, but verify*" *Het eerste rapport van de Meta Evaluatie commissie Kwaliteitszorg Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (Amsterdam: KNAW, 2007).
12. The proposals tabled by minister Plasterk for the revision of accreditation in higher education in The Netherlands combine the introduction of an institutional audit with the assessment of each individual programme. This mixed system is a necessary stage preceding the introduction of institutional accreditation in Dutch higher education.

**Stephan van Galen**  
**Leiden, 13 maart 2007**